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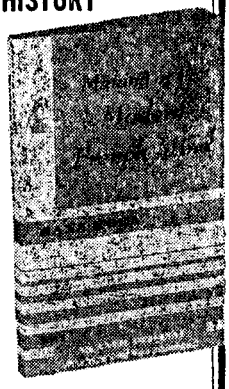

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Walter Kaufmann

ART, TRADITION, AND TRUTH

Both Nietzsche and Rilke have sometimes been criticized for their supposed inversion of "the tradition." Nietzsche in particular has been linked with Marx and Kierkegaard, and Marx has been cited again and again as having admitted that he wanted to stand Hegel on his head. Here one finds a welcome image for what is supposed to be wrong with all these men. As it happens, however, Marx has been misquoted, and the charge against all of these men should be dismissed. Alluding to one of Hegel's images, in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Marx held that Hegel had stood man on his head (as if the spirit were basic), and Marx proposed to put man on his feet again. Similarly, Kierkegaard believed that the Church had turned Christianity upside down, and Nietzsche thought that Christianity had turned almost everything upside down, a proposition with which Rilke agreed at least in part. Each was opposed to some particular tradition and—this is especially true of Nietzsche and Rilke—also to any attempt to seek security in a tradition. But there is no such thing as "the" tradition, except in an inclusive sense in which Nietzsche and Rilke are part of it—the sense in which "the tradition" is the universe of discourse in which we place and try to understand them.

It may throw some light not only on Nietzsche and Rilke but on philosophy and poetry generally if we consider some specific criticisms and see, as we refute them, how the practice of these two men is really representative of great philosophers and poets generally. Above all we should be able in this way to illuminate the relation of art to tradition and truth.

Lest we set up a straw man, let us consider some strictures actually suggested by a critic—as it happens, the only one in the vast

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literature on Nietzsche and on Rilke who has attempted any detailed comparison: Erich Heller, who has included an essay on "Rilke and Nietzsche, With a Discourse on Thought, Belief, and Poetry" in his book, *The Disinherited Mind*. On most points I agree with Heller, and I have learned from his essay. What I am interested in is not criticism of another critic but a better understanding of some really important problems which have rarely been posed so well. Some of Heller's brilliantly formulated criticisms shall here be used as points of departure.

"In the great poetry of the European tradition," Heller says, "the emotions do not interpret; they respond to the interpreted world. In Rilke's mature poetry the emotions do the interpreting and then respond to their own interpretation." At this point one is apt to think of Faulkner: often he does not first give us the interpreted course of events and then the emotional response of his characters, but he lets their emotions do the interpreting, and many readers find it very difficult to determine what has occurred. Heller continues: "All great art (and, for that matter, every human order stabilized by tradition) rests on a fundamentally fixed correspondence between the impact of external experience on man and man's articulate answers."

Is this an acceptable characterization of great art or, for that matter, great philosophy? To begin with the latter, some of the great philosophers have done a good deal of rationalizing, but that for which they are remembered is their refusal to accept the traditional order. We do not continue to read Descartes because his proofs of God's existence or the immortality of the soul command our respect, but because he resolved to doubt everything. We study Berkeley not because he was a bishop but because he questioned the existence of matter. It is not his traditional life but his radical skepticism that establishes Hume's claim to greatness. And Kant's stature is not a function of his postulates of God, freedom, and immortality, which few philosophers have taken seriously, but of his *Critique of Pure Reason* which sought to annihilate the very basis of traditional metaphysics and theology.

In this respect the great poets are at one with the great philosophers. Most of the famous names can be disregarded here because great poets who have written more than half a dozen fine poems

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without real scope are exceedingly rare. The few that remain are described splendidly, if quite unintentionally, by Heller's strictures of Rilke: "Rilke, however is the poet of a world, the philosopher of which is Nietzsche. Its formations evade all traditional systems of cartography. Doubt has dislodged all certainties. The unnameable is christened and the unsayable uttered. It is a world in which the order of correspondences is violently disturbed. We can no longer be sure that we love the lovable and abhor the detestable. Good does no good and evil no harm."

This might as well have been written about Shakespeare, whose art it is to win our hearts for men from whom our judgment would recoil. Coriolanus may seem an extreme example. But what of Lear? Macbeth? Or even Hamlet? Does Hamlet's callous attitude after he has dispatched Polonius warrant the affection which almost every reader feels for him? Or is his calculated and unmerciful destruction of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern so lovable? Or his behavior toward Ophelia? Or anything at all he does? Or is it not a fact that in Shakespeare's plays our emotions do *not* "respond to the interpreted world" but instead "do the interpreting and then respond to their own interpretation"?

No other English poet even approximates the scope of Shakespeare. But Milton and Blake who have at least tried to create worlds of their own are certainly no less open to Heller's objections than Rilke. "We can no longer be sure that we love the lovable and abhor the detestable." Is not this the very heart of *Paradise Lost*? Or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*? Or Goethe's *Faust*? Or Dostoevsky's work?

The piety of the poet consists in a reverence not for tradition but for experience. The great poet is not a mellifluous liar but a man too honest to be able to accept what is stabilized and fixed. Impressed with the lack of correspondence between his own experience and the customary interpretations, he refuses to sacrifice his perception to the stereotyped idols of society. He is, like the great philosopher, a revolutionary. In Nietzsche's words: the creator breaks the old tablets. What Heller considers an objection is really nothing less than a criterion of great poetry: "the unnameable is christened and the unsayable uttered."

To be sure, there are differences of degree; also of emphasis.

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Shakespeare's very success blinds us to his radical divergence from our customary valuations. Kant was content to bury some of the force of his radicalism in the obscurity of involved pedantry. And Plato offered some of his most revolutionary suggestions in the tone of urbane conversation. So, for that matter, did Hume. Not every philosopher challenges society to put him to death for subverting "the tradition" like Socrates.

The point is not that men like Nietzsche and Rilke were not so revolutionary after all. Rather, all great poetry and philosophy is deeply subversive—a fact appreciated by Plato and other advocates of censorship, but overlooked by the cultured Philistine who admires the great art of the past and condemns that of the present, without recapturing the experience behind either.

The common suggestion that Nietzsche or Rilke, or any number of others, fall outside "the tradition" or invert it is probably reducible to one of two positions: either we must reject, by the same token, all the great philosophers and poets, modern as well as Greek, or we are confronted with the truism that Nietzsche and Rilke are very different from Thomas and Dante. More likely than not, Thomas is viewed out of his historical context, and Dante's revolutionary innovations are disregarded. More important, Shakespeare, Milton, and Blake, Descartes, Hume, and Kant are all considered as so many stages of decline. This may be *one* way of seeing history; but the suggestion that Nietzsche and Rilke and other moderns stand apart as men who invert the European tradition is a sheer perversion of fact.

Consider just one of these supposed inversions to which Heller alludes: "Lovers seek separation, not union." He has in mind Rilke's only "Love Song":[1]

How could I keep my soul so that it might
not touch on yours? How could I elevate
it over you to reach to other things?
Oh, I would like to hide it out of sight

1 All translations are my own. Those of Rilke appear here for the first time; those of Nietzsche are from *The Portable Nietzsche,* selected and translated, with an introduction, prefaces, and notes, by Walter Kaufmann (The Viking Press, New York 1954). With what Nietzsche and Rilke have in common I deal in another essay, in the *Kenyon Review.*

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with something lost in endless darkenings,
in some remote, still place, so desolate
it does not sing whenever your depth sings.
Yet all that touches us, myself and you,
takes us together like a violin bow
that draws a single voice out of two strings.
Upon what instrument have we been strung?
And who is playing with us in his hand?
Sweet is the song.

This poem does not reflect either a deliberately contrived or a historically accomplished inversion of the world. What it does reveal is the honesty of a perception that was not blinded by traditional preconceptions, stereotypes, or clichés.

Do lovers always and only seek union? If the experience recorded in Rilke's poem is new, it is new in the same way in which the Impressionists' experience of light and shadow and color or Giotto's experience of perspective was new. In each case, convention impeded perception, and the achievement of the artist was a triumph of honesty.

Of course, lovers do not always seek separation, any more than love always makes us more lonely, or for that matter less lonely. There is a wealth of experiences that are not dreamt of in the poetry we have—no less, in fact, than are dreamt of only in poetry.

The experience which Rilke communicates depends on an extreme sensitivity to the feelings of others, or at least one other human being, and a penchant for analysis—traits which occur separately more often than together—and perhaps also a purpose in life beyond loving and being loved. Without exception, these were traits of Nietzsche too, and they help to explain his dictum, "my greatest dangers lie in pity." He himself comments on it in a letter (September 14, 1884): "This is the mistake which I seem to make eternally, that I imagine the sufferings of others as far greater than they really are."

Nietzsche's "revaluation" of pity was prompted in part by his honest perception of various experiences of pity, which for him was not a mere word but a cross. I do not mean to dissolve a philosophic position by deriving it from psychological accidents; on the contrary, any philosophic discussion of pity should be based on an understand-

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ing of the experience of pitying and being pitied. Nor did Nietzsche here invert "the tradition." As he himself insisted, his critique of pity is in the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Spinoza, La Rochefoucauld, and Kant. Surely, many of those who make much of tradition do not really know it well at all, and "the tradition" is, more often than not, an honorific name for the critic's own prejudices or, to be more polite, values. And belief in "the tradition" is so popular partly because it makes a virtue of security from deep and disturbing experiences.

Dante's *Vita Nuova* is sufficient testimony that he did not seek such security. We have few comparable records of self-exposure in both senses—meaning first of all, exposure to profound distraction. In this experience and in the act of creation in which it issues, the received order is always "violently disturbed" and "the unsayable uttered." In this respect, the work of Nietzsche and Rilke is at one with that of other great philosophers and poets, and they are closer to Dante than are the traditionalists. Tradition is what comes afterwards.

II

Let us return to Heller for another major criticism: "Neither Rilke nor Nietzsche praises the praiseworthy. They praise. They do not believe the believable. They believe. And it is their praising and believing itself that becomes praiseworthy and believable in the act of worship. Theirs is a *religio intransitiva.* Future anthropologists may see in it the distinctive religious achievement of modern Europe, the theological equivalent of *l'art pour l'art.*"

This is a seductive interpretation, almost equally close to some Thomists and to Jaspers' reading of Nietzsche, but it is utterly unfair to both Nietzsche and Rilke. Their intense celebration of intensity may occasionally appear in this light, and the attitude Heller describes is certainly not entirely imaginary. In fact, this outlook has been given expression in one of the finest works of recent German prose, Hermann Hesse's *Klingsors letzter Sommer,* in which Klingsor says: "The sensuous is not worth one hair more than the spirit—as little as the other way around. It is all one, it is all equally good. Whether you embrace a woman or make a poem is the same. If

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only the main thing is there, the love, the burning, being seized, then it makes no difference whether you are a monk on Mount Athos or an epicurean in Paris."

In their mature phase, both Nietzsche and Rilke refused to praise either the monk or the epicurean. Far from merely praising praise or believing in belief, both believed in, and praised, a particular kind of man and way of life. Both were inspired by their vision of "a *new* greatness of man." And in section 212 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche argued that every great philosopher has been inspired by such a vision: He "has always found himself, and always had to find himself, in opposition to his today." The great philosophers have always been "the bad conscience of their time." Inspired by their vision of "a *new* greatness of man," they have applied "the knife vivisectionally to the very virtues of the time" and uncovered "how much hypocrisy" and "how many lies were concealed under the most honored type of their contemporary morality, how much virtue was outlived." Nietzsche's own profuse criticisms too were inspired by a positive conception: "Today the concept of 'greatness' entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being capable of being different, standing alone, and having to live independently." Or as he says toward the end of this passage: "Precisely this should be called greatness: to be capable of being as manifold as whole, as wide as full."

Clearly, Nietzsche is not praising indiscriminately for the sake of praising. One must empty his extremely concrete conceptions of their wealth of psychological detail before one can claim that they are hollow abstractions and not "believable." In the process of doing this—and Jaspers, for example, has done this in his two books on Nietzsche—one is bound to lose sight of the intimate connection, so accurately stressed by Nietzsche himself, between his positive conceptions and his trenchant criticisms of modern man. That his strictures are misunderstood when they are divorced from the vision that inspires them, that is the theme of the chapter "On Passing By" in which Zarathustra distinguishes himself from his ape by insisting: "Out of love alone shall my despising and my warning bird fly up, not out of the swamp." Zarathustra's comment on "The Despisers of the Body" is no less applicable to Nietzsche and the philosophers whom he admires: "It is their respect that begets their contempt."

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The man whom Nietzsche praises is neither an epicurean nor a monk, however burning and however seized, but he combines sensuousness and spirituality, profound feeling and a penetrating intellect. He is the man of reflective passion and passionate reflection. All of Nietzsche's heroes, from Heraclitus and Socrates to Caesar, Leonardo, and Goethe are models and anticipations of such a type, "as manifold as whole, as wide as full."

What Rilke has in common with Nietzsche is not praise for the sake of praising, but rather that he praised the same kind of life and, again like Nietzsche, praised it not merely implicitly but with all his power and consciousness. And it is this that distinguishes Nietzsche and Rilke from most philosophers and poets of the past. Moreover, it is from Nietzsche above all others that one learns to ask about every philosophy and every religion, and about great poets and artists too: what is it that they praise?

Once we ask this question, we cannot fail to see how much closer Nietzsche is to Plato, Aristotle, and Shakespeare than are most of the defenders of "the tradition," let alone those who believe in the trinity of Christianity, science, and democracy. One invokes the awesome name of Aristotle but ignores his striking portrait of the great-souled man. One cannot but admit Shakespeare's greatness but does not ask what kind of man and life he praised; one ignores, or tries to explain away, his 94th sonnet instead of comparing it with his plays or such lines as these from *Measure for Measure*:

> *O, it is excellent*
> *To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous*
> *To use it like a giant.*

Surely, this is Nietzsche in a nutshell. Consider Zarathustra's discourse "On Those Who Are Sublime": "There is nobody from whom I want beauty as much as from you who are powerful: let your kindness be your final self-conquest. Of all evil I deem you capable: therefore I want the good from you. Verily, I have often laughed at the weaklings who thought themselves good because they had no claws." But when Nietzsche himself sums up in six words what he praises, "the Roman Caesar with Christ's soul" (*The Will to Power*, section 983), Jaspers mistakes this crowning image for a mere juggling of hollow concepts, "without any power of vision and un-

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realizable" (*Nietzsche und das Christentum*). In fact, Nietzsche's praise is neither intransitive nor does it invert "the tradition"; rather, the man he envisages invites comparison with the visions of Plato, Aristotle, and Shakespeare.

III

The one major charge that is still lacking in this orthodox indictment of Nietzsche and Rilke is their abandonment of something that is usually called, rather vaguely, "realism." Heller does not require this cliché and spells out the charge in some detail. For Nietzsche and Rilke, he says, "the separation between art and reality appears to be complete. Reality is the death of the spirit and art its salvation. Where does truth reside? Is it in the deadly real world or in the saving vision of the artist? The question lingers on the all but imperceptible border-line between delusion and lunacy, between Nietzsche's madness and Rilke's prophetic pose, tenaciously maintained even beyond the confines of poetic inspiration. Nietzsche, believing that truth was insufferable and that poetry was an illusion, continually suspected that at least some of his thought was merely poetry. Rilke, on the other hand, succeeded most of the time in convincing himself that the thought behind his poetry was the mind of truth."

Rilke's facile belief that his elegies and sonnets were gifts of inscrutable inspiration undoubtedly reflects a lack of strength and a sense of his own inability to effect any improvements. There are lines in the elegies which appear to be the mere padding of pathos, and many passages in the sonnets make little sense. Again and again the mood and the verve must sustain the lines, and the lines fail to sustain the mood. Here the poet's appeal to inspiration cannot hide the failure of inspiration. Rilke's elegies sometimes share the fault of Whitman's long poems, though Rilke's obscurity makes it harder to find him out. Most of the sonnets too are marred by a lack of sufficient insight or perception to fill fourteen lines. But the same is surely true of Shakespeare's sonnets, and even some of Shakespeare's best achieve excellence only in the opening lines and end rather lamely. The above mentioned 94th sonnet is one of the most notable exceptions. Many weaknesses of Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* are explained

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by his boast that the first twenty-six sonnets were written between the 2nd and the 5th of February, 1922, and that he never altered a word. We recall Ben Jonson's retort to those who praised Shakespeare for never blotting a line: wish he had blotted a thousand! While some of Rilke's commentators have been too worshipful, and obscurity, though not necessarily a fault, is no proof of profundity either, all this does not set Rilke apart or prove him a minor poet. The fact remains that few poets of any age have written as many superb poems as Rilke.

To come to Nietzsche. When he contrasted truth and beauty, he had in mind a particular conception of beauty: a prettification of reality. He opposed those who argued that something must be true because it would be beautiful if it were, or that something could not be true because it was not at all pretty. Like everything admitted about Rilke, this is very far indeed from supporting any complete "separation between art and reality." So is Nietzsche's fear in "The Song of Melancholy" in *Zarathustra* that he might be "only poet." As he says in the same poem, he means that he might be "only speaking colorfully . . . climbing around on mendacious word bridges." Although he considered *Zarathustra* the gift of inspiration, as he tells us in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche did not stop writing afterwards and consider his life sufficiently justified, as Rilke did more or less after having completed his elegies and sonnets. In spite of his exceedingly poor health, Nietzsche sought further clarity in half a dozen further books in which he is clearly not "only speaking colorfully."

Here is some basis for contrasting Nietzsche and Rilke. In section 146 of *Human, All-too-Human,* Nietzsche says: "Regarding truths, the artist has a weaker morality than the thinker." But Rilke's lack of perfect sincerity goes beyond any necessity of his art; and the "prophetic pose" which disturbs Heller in some of the letters also mars some of the elegies and sonnets. This lack of ultimate honesty with himself is one reason for ranking Rilke below Nietzsche in overall stature. Besides, Nietzsche's scope far exceeds Rilke's. But the question of the separation of art and reality cannot be settled in these terms: it raises a much more general issue.

The dualism of art and reality has been denied by almost all artists. If "reality" is monopolized by convention and mediocrity and

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all intense experience and keen perception are banished from it, then of course the artist is cut off from it. But one can surely question the preconceptions in which men hide from the risks of powerful experience. Nietzsche and Rilke did not exalt prettification above sordid reality; they rejected bloodless stereotypes for a vision of magnificent terror.

Consider such diverse painters as Rembrandt, Rubens, and Van Gogh. Rembrandt did not shut his eyes to reality to escape into a realm of agreeable fancy: he saw the aged, the beggars, and the outcasts of society as they had not been seen before. He penetrated all kinds of traditional prejudices to see the beauty of reality. Well might a contemporary have objected, as Heller does to Rilke and Nietzsche: "We can no longer be sure that we love the lovable and abhor the detestable." Precisely this revaluation is a measure of Rembrandt's greatness.

A critic brought up on the values of Raphael, Giorgione, or even Titian, might have voiced Heller's protest when confronted with Rubens' nudes. But Rubens did not escape from reality into art: he saw beauty where previous painters had failed to see it; he was in Nietzsche's sense a Dionysian artist. And so of course was Van Gogh. His world may be a realm of madness; his flowers, cypresses, and starry skies do not look like snapshots. But he did not fly into fancy; he did not retreat from a tragic world to find refuge among comfortable creatures of the mind. Rather he seems to be saying: even in madness there is beauty, even in fever and torment there is glory, even in despair there is power.

In the end all three criticisms of Nietzsche and Rilke come down to this: they were different from St. Thomas; they did not praise what St. Thomas praised or believe what he believed; and their conception of reality was not his. The norm of course need not be St. Thomas, though it often is he even when he is not named; the norm could be merely the anonymous "one"—what Heidegger calls *Das Man*. What matters is that the critic thinks he knows what is praiseworthy and what is real, instead of considering the possibility that men like Nietzsche and Rilke, Plato and Shakespeare, Rembrandt and Rubens can teach us something about these matters by changing our perception.

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IV

The fashionable attempt to understand great thinkers or artists in terms of their historical situation leads to as much misunderstanding as understanding. Neither shortcomings nor tragedy should be blamed on "the time." One should first consider whether other ages—and here one should not think solely of the Middle Ages of which, moreover, one usually does not know too much—were entirely different. Nor should one rush into psychological explanations without asking whether writers of a different psychological constitution fare very differently. Nietzsche's and Rilke's profound solitude, broken only briefly by the philosopher's friendship with Wagner and the poet's with Rodin, and the encounter of both, fifteen years apart, with Lou Salomé, seems to have affected their work and invites psychological and historical explanations. I shall give the merest suggestion of each kind of approach.

In personal life both men were exceedingly shy and retiring. Their passion was set free only when they wrote. The world has gained because they poured all their feelings into their books; but the histrionics which others vent casually on their friends have here become part of the work. Solitude, while greatly increasing the intensity of feeling, diminishes the powers of self-criticism.

Or: it was the age that condemned these men to utter loneliness. And that very lack of ordinary communication which keeps the writer's experience undefiled by common preconceptions also makes for a lack of disciplined scrutiny. We find the same faults in the last two great books of James Joyce and already in the Second Part of *Faust* which Goethe kept secret until his death. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the artist loses contact with his audience and as a result becomes undisciplined. By way of contrast, Aeschylus and Sophocles contended against each other before an interested public which they were educating in the process. Nietzsche and Rilke stood alone without rivals or audience, and what little adulation each received only made matters worse.

Such explanations do not go deep enough. Shakespeare had an audience and wrote with the immediate aim of having his plays performed, and there was no lack of rivals except insofar as his greatness precludes our giving them that name. Yet what striking lack of

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disciplined scrutiny! And what incredible histrionics have here become part of the work! The same is true of Plato's dialogues. Rilke is vastly different from Shakespeare, and Nietzsche from Plato; yet they all face the same problem. It is rooted in the poetic impulse which is as eager to express as it is reluctant to exclude. Most philosophers do not know this plight; but that is because, unlike Plato and Nietzsche, they are no poets.

V

The relation of great poetry to "the time" and to truth deserves further reflection. Comparing Shakespeare with Dante, T. S. Eliot says: "It is *equally* great poetry, though the philosophy behind it is not great." Eliot is another critic who knows what is real and praiseworthy and true, without the benefit of any reading of Shakespeare. As if Shakespeare might not affect one's notions of great philosophy. In this instance, however, Shakespeare receives a dispensation: "it was his business to express the greatest emotional intensity of his time, based on whatever his time happened to think." It is one of the central themes of Eliot's essay on "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," which we have quoted, that critics should not read themselves into Shakespeare; but surely Eliot is thinking of himself when he suggests that the shortcomings of the poet must be blamed on his time. As if "his time" thought anything in particular. Shakespeare's, like ours, abounded in ideas.

Nevertheless I agree that the truth of beliefs is not relevant to the greatness of poetry. Once more I shall use Heller as a foil. He argues that Rilke's poetry expresses beliefs, that these beliefs happen to be false (as Eliot would say: "the philosophy behind it is not great"), and that (as Eliot would not say) Rilke's poetry is worse for that. Rilke expressed Nietzsche's philosophy in verse, and this may well have been as great a philosophy as "his time" offered him; but if Rilke's beliefs had been Christian—this standard is suggested throughout Heller's book—his poetry would be that much better.

The argument that to Heller's mind "finally proves" the relevance of the truth of beliefs to the greatness of poetry is this: "There are ideas and beliefs so prosaic, outlandish or perverse in their innermost structure that no great or good poetry can come from them;

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for instance Hitler's racialism. . . . If there were no relation, there would be no reason either why the most perverse or idiotic beliefs should not be convertible into *great* poetry. They are not." That some ideas are too prosaic is of course quite irrelevant. Probably no great or good poetry will ever give an exposition of Goedel's theorem, but not because it is untrue. And as for Hitler's racialism, Germany did not produce any great poetry at all under Hitler's regime; and the reasons are obvious. Moreover, biological, or pseudo-biological, theories rarely form the subject matter of great serious poetry.

Perhaps dramatic poetry is the genre in which beliefs are most frequently expressed. Does it bear out Heller's view? On the contrary: the great tragic poets excel precisely at presenting attitudes which one would generally consider "outlandish or perverse" with such poetic power that we experience them from the inside. And in epic poetry, the attitudes of Homer's heroes, or the poet's for that matter, are scarcely closer to Christianity than Rilke's elegies. Great poetry does not fit moralistic preconceptions. It was because he recognized this that Plato proposed to expurgate Homer and expel the dramatic poets from his ideal city.

We should ask not only Heller but also Eliot whether there is any major work of great and good poetry that does not abound in "outlandish or perverse" ideas, whether even one such work is "Christian" in the somewhat laudatory sense which determines contemporary English usage. Dante reached the heights of his poetic power in his *Inferno,* and his beliefs about hell might well strike modern readers as "outlandish or perverse." And the hero of the greatest Protestant epic is Satan.

The traditionalist critics take for granted that we know the truth of beliefs quite independently of poetry, and that the greatness of a *philosopher* is unquestionably determined by the truth of his beliefs. Both these assumptions are false. If the question were raised whether J. S. Mill was a greater philosopher than Plato, would the issue depend on how many beliefs of each were true and how many false? The traditionalists do not understand the function of beliefs either in philosophy or in poetry.

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VI

The most concise and suggestive formulation of the function of beliefs in poetry is T. S. Eliot's: "The poet who 'thinks' is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of thought. But he is not necessarily interested in the thought itself." I think this is very wrong.

Consider one of Rilke's poems (*Neue Gedichte,* Part Two):

ARCHAIC TORSO OF APOLLO

We did not know his high, unheard of head
where his eyes' apples ripened. Yet his torso has
retained their glowing as
a candelabrum where his vision, not yet dead,

only turned low, still shines. For else the breast
could not blind you, nor could we still discern
the smile that wanders in the loins' faint turn
to that core which once carried manhood's crest.

Else would this stone, disfigured and too small,
stand mute under the shoulders' lucid fall
and not gleam like a great cat's skin, and not

burst out of all its contours, bright
as a great star: there is no spot
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Surely, Rilke did not have a thought before he looked for a suitable emotional equivalent, found a torso, and decided that this might do. What he records is his experience of the statue—an experience in which various perceptions, thoughts, and emotions interpenetrate, as they do in the poem. The poem expresses several thoughts, not merely their emotional equivalents. It presents the thoughts themselves in their emotional context, as parts of an experience.

The thought apart from any experience, torn out of its living context and examined under the intellectual microscope like a piece of dead tissue, does not concern the poet, *qua* poet. It may interest him insofar as he is also philosophically inclined. So far, Eliot is right;

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but I should not call the piece of dead tissue "the thought itself."

Eliot's notion of thinking is altogether inadequate: "In truth neither Shakespeare nor Dante did any real thinking—that was not their job." Whatever "real" thinking may be, it certainly is no job. Shakespeare did not really think because there is no evidence "that he thought to any purpose; that he had any coherent view of life, or that he recommended any procedure to follow." These are very strange criteria of thinking, at variance not only with our ordinary use of the term but also with the practice of many outstanding philosophers. When Eliot denies that Shakespeare thought, but then speaks of "whatever his time happened to think," he comes close to implying that there are really only two kinds of thinking: the "good" thinking accepted by Dante, and the "bad" thinking of the times in which poets less fortunate than Dante are condemned to live and write.

The separation of thought from experience, however, which Eliot makes the criterion of "real" thinking, has its dark side. Religious beliefs, for example, though originally prompted by some experience, often become an acceptable substitute for religious experience or prevent the believer from savoring the full range of his own inimitable experience. The thought that "you must change your life" is a relatively common thought, present not only in Rilke's time but in all ages. What distinguishes the poet is not that he found a striking emotional equivalent for it, but that he did not let the thought get in the way of the experience; and what Rilke has in common with Nietzsche is not beliefs as much as experiences—and the determination to let no belief dehydrate them.

The dichotomy of thought and emotion on which Eliot depends is quite modern and particularly characteristic, *pace* Eliot, of logical positivism, especially in its first and crudest phase. It was largely alien to Greek philosophy. Plato juxtaposed reason and the senses without confining emotion to either realm: he knew the passion of thinking too well. Among the earliest pre-Socratics there is no evidence of any division of man into disjointed faculties; and this is one main reason why Heidegger rejects the whole Western tradition that begins with Plato, why he goes back to the pre-Socratics, and why he has occupied himself so largely with Hölderlin and Rilke, saying that his own philosophy is really an explication of Rilke. He

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seeks a mode of perception that leaves behind the disunity of modern man. And Rilke, like Nietzsche, is an outstanding representative of a non-positivistic sensibility in which thought and emotion interpenetrate.

In sum: I cannot agree that the philosopher is interested "in the thought itself" while the poet is not. Many philosophers are altogether too exclusively concerned with the relation of a thought to other thoughts, and too little with the thought itself. They are interested in its consistency with other ideas and in the adequacy of arguments in which it appears either as a link or as a conclusion; but they are "not necessarily interested in the thought itself"—often much less so than the poet. Most men, including many philosophers, discuss the truth of beliefs without any clear notion of their meaning—of their many possible meanings. What the poet, however, is supremely interested in and can teach the philosopher is the meaning of thoughts; and where this is ignored, any discussion of truth is likely to degenerate into the most arid scholasticism. The relation between philosopher and poet is not a one-way affair, and least of all does the poet give polished expression to the ideas of the philosopher.

VII

What does the great poet do? I have rejected the traditionalists' account of the relation of poetry to tradition, reality, and truth: they fail to recognize the essential autonomy of poetry which subverts stereotypes hallowed by tradition, changes our perception of reality, and makes accepted truths questionable by making us aware of the concrete meanings of ideas.

The poet does not imitate reality. This Greek conception, which was originally suggested by epic and dramatic poetry, does not do justice to Homer and Sophocles any more than to Shakespeare. The great poet is the enemy of our everyday reality: he makes that which we have seen with our own eyes appear as a mere shadow of that reality which we encounter in *Oedipus* or *Lear, Prometheus* or *The Brothers Karamazov*. He shows us that we live on the surface and are all but blind, and says in Rilke's words: "you must change your life."

In drama and epic, novel and lyrical poem, the poet records

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individual experiences in their unmitigated subjectivity and thus expands our subjectivity and cracks our horizons. The poet is not bound by any man's thoughts; he records experience with its emotionally colored thoughts and his thoughts about emotions. He neither imitates an archaic torso of Apollo nor sets down in rhyme thoughts about it which someone else has had before him. He gives us the experience of a man who is unusually sensitive and thoughtful.

Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" is admittedly quite different from a clinical recording of a stream of consciousness. But how can one communicate an emotion, or for that matter any experience, seeing that emotion has part in all of them? General labels like "admire" or "beautiful" or "love" conceal a multitude of thoughts, sensations, and perceptions, if they do not altogether supplant the dazzling texture of experience. A phrase like "shoulders' lucid fall" is not the emotional equivalent of a thought—what thought?—but the thoughtful equivalent of an emotion.

In the child's consciousness, thought and emotion are not yet dissociated, and many words that later lose their color have a powerful emotional impact. Gradually we learn to some extent to disentangle thoughts from emotions, not only in mathematics and science generally but whenever we are asked to tell simply and briefly "what happened." Eventually, the emotions shrivel until they become weak enough to be confined by a small vocabulary and content merely to accompany that which really matters. The great artist liberates the emotions and recreates the sheer wonder of childhood without surrendering the development of the intellect.

Like a child, the great artist is less confined by convention than most adults: he experiences things in a profoundly individual manner, more intensely and honestly, less swayed by reputations and authorities. Aware of this, Nietzsche and Rilke occasionally made the child the symbol of the creator, but neither shared the anti-intellectualism of some of the romantics or wanted to return to childhood or "nature." Nietzsche in particular recognized that the greatest artists were men of surpassing intellectual power, men like Leonardo and Michelangelo, Dante and Goethe; and he wanted the same freedom for the intellect as for the emotions. Neither he nor Rilke would consider following the precedent of some of the romantics by fleeing back into the arms of authority.

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Feeling the impact of Rodin and Cézanne—he wrote on both—Rilke thought at times that it was the poet's task

> *just to say: house,*
> *bridge, well, gate, jug, fruit tree, window—*
> *at most: column, tower—but to* say *it, understand,*
> *oh, to say it as the things themselves never*
> *thought of existing intensely.*

Seeing how a painter can take a jug or an apple and restore to it the intensity which it had lost in ordinary adult perception; seeing how a sculptor can take the apparently unmysterious shape of a human body and show us passion, longing, despair, grace, agony, and beauty, Rilke thought that the poet might take the everyday words and restore their poetry to them.

One can re-experience this thought and understand it; but if we examine it instead of abandoning ourselves to the rhythms of Rilke's ninth elegy, we find that this aestheticism borders on the absurd: "Are we perhaps *here* just to say: house"? Rilke himself might have admitted that we are here for no purpose at all, but can give our life a purpose; and "just to say: house" is an absurd purpose.

The poet is not condemned merely to revitalize words; and any mystery that one can ultimately find in the words, "house, bridge, well" is a paltry and bloodless thing compared to Rodin's *Tête de la douleur* or *La Martyre*—the mute hopelessness that the sculptor has forced to utter not merely a blessing (like Balaam who had intended to pronounce a curse) but the comfort of complete achievement.

The great poet revitalizes words only incidentally. To brook comparison with Rodin he must achieve with words what Rodin does in bronze or marble. He does not imitate reality but realizes that our everyday world is not so much a brute reality as a human creation no longer recognized as such; an artifact that has fallen into the hands of uncomprehending apes; something that is all skin and void of blood because the mass of men have lost the perception of those more poetic, more creative, more childlike men who originally fashioned words and values as a mirror of the mysteries they felt. But the poet does not restore the life that was there in the beginning, in childhood or in the childhood of the race: he creates new

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life, more than life—that for which human life is a reach and aspiration.

John Stuart Mill once defined matter as "the permanent possibility of sensation." For Rilke reality is a call to perceive—but to perceive as has never been perceived before—and to transform, to create our own world which is essentially new. The world is the raw material of the creator. It is not what a divine creator has in the beginning wrought out of chaos; we are still confronted by the chaos out of which we must create a world.

Not only the traditionalists have shrunk from this prospect. Plato did too. He thought that what passes in time is merely an imperfect explication of what is eternal. Time, he said, is the moving image of eternity. Such otherworldliness slights the power of man. Art is the eternal image of the moving. The flux is sound and fury signifying nothing, but human art has fashioned works of such perfection that men have thought the world must be a copy of what are in fact human creations. For man's deepest superstition demands that excellence must have priority in time too. Nothing has ever prevailed against it in the popular mind except the more recent superstition that excellence must always appear late. But excellence, like ecstasy, is always possible. And it is a fallacy to mistake our oblivion of time for an experience of something transcendent and eternal. In truth, it is only in some works of art that ecstasy endures.

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Federico García Lorca

CRUCIFIXION

The moon might rest, at last, on the whitest curve of a horse.
A beam of violet light that breaks from a wound
and blazons heaven with the dead child's instant of circumcision.

Blood fell on the mountains, and angels went in search of it,
but their chalices held only wind; blood spilled from their shoe-tops,
at last.
Lame dogs puffed at their pipes, and the smell of hot leather
was gray on the circling lips of those who vomit on street-corners.
A clamor of weeping arose from the arid night of the South,
for the moon burned the phallus of horses in candle-fire.
Virtuoso of purple, a tailor
held three holy virgins at bay
and showed them a skull's shape through the glass of the window:
three, circling a camel
white, in the suburbs, and weeping, whose way
led through the needle's implacable eye in the dawn.
Crucifix, thorn-point, and nail!
Thorn nailed on the bone till galaxies rust in the sun!
With none to look back, how the sky might uncover itself!
And a great voice spoke, and the pharisees said:
the milk is big in the dugs of the accursed cow.
A multitude bolted their doors
and the rain fell, resolute, drenching the heart, on the streets,
while evening clouded with woodcutters and barking dogs
and the darkened city died under the carpenter's hammer.

Surely the cow is accursed
with udders of bird-shot,
the pharisees said.

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But their feet soaked up blood, and the wanton-in-heart
spattered the froth of the lake on the temple walls.
The infallible flash of our lifetime's redemption was revealed;
for the moon bathed the blistering horse-flesh
with water drops—
not the living shape of a child, but the carrion stilled on the sand.
And the frosts went abroad on the earth, singing songs,
and the frogs lit their flares on the double shore of the river.
The cow is accursed—is accursed, accursed—
that banishes sleep, said the pharisees,
and withdrew through the riotous streets to their houses,
jostling the drunkards and spitting the salt of the sacrifice,
while blood moved behind them, with a noise like the bleating of
lambs.

So it befell, on a time;
and the whole earth awakened, shedding tremulous rivers of moths.

(18 October 1929, New York)

(Translated from the Spanish by Ben Belitt)

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Georg Büchner

LENZ

Translation and Introduction by Michael Hamburger

Lenz is the only story known to have been written by Georg Büchner, the author of *Danton's Death* and *Wozzeck*. The story is based on factual evidence. Büchner's sources were a diary kept by Oberlin in 1778 and a French biography of Oberlin, both of which were published by friends of Büchner's in 1831.

Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, the subject of this story, was a poet and dramatist of the *Sturm und Drang* period in German letters. He was born in 1751 in the Baltic province of Livonia. His father was a Lutheran pastor and he himself studied theology at Königsberg. After two years' rather lukewarm study, he gave up to become private tutor to the two young Barons von Kleist. In 1771 he traveled with them to Strasbourg, where he met Goethe. When Goethe left for a journey with one of the Kleist brothers, Lenz was introduced to Friederike Brion, Goethe's inamorata, and fell in love with her. He became notorious as "Goethe's ape." He suffered his first attack of insanity in Switzerland, where he stayed with C. Kaufmann from November 1777 to January 1778. Kaufmann sent him to Oberlin's vicarage in the Steintal and later visited him there with Lisette Ziegler, his fiancée. This is the period of Büchner's story. Although Lenz's mental state gradually improved after his removal to Strasbourg, he was taken back to Lithuania in 1779, fell into obscurity and died near Moscow in 1792.

Though *Lenz* was left unfinished when Büchner died in 1837—at the age of twenty-three—he wrote it in Strasbourg in 1836, certainly before *Wozzeck*, possibly before *Leonce und Lena*. Apart from a single gap which we can fill in from Büchner's sources, it is unlikely that he would have substantially changed or amended his story. The unusual narrative style, with its repetitions, ellipses and colloquialisms, is wholly in accordance with his general principles and with the peculiar subject of this story, a subject wholly beyond the scope of contemporary writers of fiction. Among other things, Büchner was a brilliant scientist; but

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his interest in Lenz was not so much scientific as sympathetic. The aesthetic principles of Lenz—and other writers of the *Sturm und Drang* school—link up with Büchner's own innovations, but especially with his creation of a poetic realism which combines the accurate documentation of facts with an imaginative interpretation of character. The aesthetic theories propounded by the Lenz of Büchner's story are adapted from the theoretical writings of Lenz himself, such as the following from his *Anmerkungen zum Theater*: ". . . But since the world has no bridges and we have to content ourselves with the things that are there, we do at least feel an accretion to our existence, happiness, by re-creating its Creation on a small scale." Büchner's Lenz says almost the same thing in slightly different words: "I take it that God has made the world as it should be . . . our only aspiration should be to re-create modestly in His manner." Büchner applied the same principle to *Lenz*; but in spite of his modest ambition to re-create, rather than to invent, he invariably improved on his material.

Büchner's material provided him with all the facts and some of the circumstances; but all the descriptions of landscapes—landscapes seen through the eyes of Lenz—and of Lenz's thoughts and feelings are Büchner's contribution. This synthesis of fact and imagination is characteristic of Büchner's work; for he hated Idealism in philosophy and Romanticism in literature. His alternative to these two dominant trends of his time was so disturbingly individual that his works were not appreciated until more than half a century after his death. Since then they have been admired by writers of every school, from the Naturalists to the Symbolists and Expressionists. Some of the finest German prose of this century—such as Hofmannsthal's *Andreas* fragment—shows the unmistakable influence of *Lenz*.

On the 20th of January Lenz went across the mountains. The summits and the high slopes covered with snow, gray stones all the way down to the valleys, green plains, rocks and pine-trees.

It was damp and cold; water trickled down the rocks and gushed over the path. The branches of the pine trees drooped heavily in the moist air. Gray clouds traveled in the sky, but all was so dense—and then the mist rose like steam, slow and clammy, climbed through the shrubs, so lazy, so awkward. Indifferently he moved on; the way did not matter to him, up or down. He felt no tiredness, only sometimes it struck him as unpleasant that he could not walk on his head.

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At first there was an urge, a movement inside him, when the stones and rocks bounded away, when the gray forest shook itself beneath him and the mist now blurred its outlines, now half unveiled the trees' gigantic limbs; there was an urge, a movement inside him, he looked for something, as though for lost dreams, but he found nothing. All seemed so small to him, so near, so wet. He would have liked to put the whole earth to dry behind the stove, he could not understand why so much time was needed to descend a steep slope, to reach a distant point; he thought that a few paces should be enough to cover any distance. Only from time to time, when the storm thrust clouds into the valley, and the mist rose in the forest, when the voices near the rocks awoke, now like thunder subsiding far away, now rushing back toward him as if in their wild rejoicing they desired to sing the praise of earth, and the clouds like wild neighing horses galloped toward him, and the sunshine pierced in between and came to draw a flashing sword against the snow-covered plains, so that a bright, dazzling light cut across the summits into the valleys; or when the gale drove the clouds downwards and hurled them into a pale-blue lake, and then the wind died down and from the depths of the ravines, from the crests of the pine trees drifted upwards, with a humming like that of lullabies and pealing bells, and a soft red hue mingled with the deep azure, and little clouds on silver wings passed across, and everywhere the mountain tops, sharp and solid, shone and glittered for miles—then he felt a strain in his chest, he stood struggling for breath, heaving, his body bent forward, his eyes and mouth wide open; he thought that he must draw the storm into himself, contain it all within him, he stretched himself out and lay on the earth, dug his way into the All, it was an ecstasy that hurt him—or he rested and laid his head into the moss and half-closed his eyes, and then it withdrew, away, far away from him, the earth receded from him, became small as a wandering star and dipped down into a roaring stream which moved its clear waters beneath him. But these were only moments; then, soberly, he would rise, resolute, calm, as though a silhouetted drama had passed before his eyes—he remembered nothing.

Toward evening he came to the highest point of the mountain range, to the snow field from which one descended again into the flat country in the west; he sat down on the top. It had grown calmer

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toward evening; the cloud formations, constant and motionless, hung in the sky; as far as the eyes could reach, nothing but summits from which broad stretches of land descended, and everything so still, so gray, lost in twilight. He experienced a feeling of terrible loneliness; he was alone, quite alone. He wanted to talk to himself, but he could not, he hardly dared to breathe; the bending of his feet sounded like thunder beneath him, he had to sit down. He was seized with a nameless terror in this nothingness: he was in the void! He leaped to his feet and rushed down the slope.

It had grown dark, heaven and earth were melting into one. It seemed as though something were following him, as though something horrible must catch up with him, something that men cannot bear, as though madness on horseback were chasing him.

At last he heard voices; he was relieved, his heart grew lighter. He was told that another half-hour would see him to Waldbach.

He passed through the village. Lights shone in the windows, he looked inside as he went by: children at table, old women, girls, all with quiet, composed faces. It seemed to him that it was these faces that radiated light; he began to feel quite cheerful, and soon he was at the vicarage in Waldbach.

They were at table when he came in; his blond hair hung in locks about his pale face, his eyes and the corners of his mouth were twitching, his clothes were torn.

Oberlin welcomed him, thinking he was a workman: "You're welcome, although you're a stranger to me."

"I'm a friend of ——'s, and convey his regards to you."

"Your name, if you please?"

"Lenz."

"Ha, ha, ha, has it not appeared in print? Haven't I read several dramas ascribed to a gentleman of that name?"

"Yes, but be kind enough not to judge me by them."

The conversation continued, he groped for words and told his story quickly, but in torment; gradually he was calmed by the homely room and the quiet faces that stood out from the shadows; the bright child's face on which the light seemed to rest and which looked up inquisitively and trustingly, and the mother who sat further back in the shadow, motionless as an angel. He began to tell them about his home; he drew a number of costumes; they surrounded him closely, sympathetically, soon he felt at home. His pale childish face,

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now smiling, his lively manner when telling his story! He grew restful; it seemed to him as though familiar figures, forgotten faces stepped again from the darkness, old songs awoke, he was away, far away.

At last it was time to go. He was escorted across the street, the vicarage was too small, he was given a room in the schoolhouse. He went upstairs. It was cold up there, a large room, empty, a high bedstead in the background. He put down the light on the table and walked about. He recalled what day it was, how he had come, where he was. The room in the vicarage with its lights, its dear faces; it was like a shadow to him, a dream, and he felt the emptiness again, as he had felt it on the mountain; but now he could not fill it in with anything, the light had gone out, darkness swallowed everything. An unspeakable terror possessed him. He leaped to his feet, ran out of the room, down the stairs, out of the house; but in vain, all was dark, a nothing—even to himself he was a dream. Single, isolated thoughts flickered up, he held them fast; he felt constrained to say "Our Father" again and again. He could no longer find himself. An obscure instance urged him to save himself; he ran into stones, tore himself with his nails. The pain began to recall him to consciousness; he hurled himself into the fountain but the water was not deep, he splashed about.

Then people came; they had heard him, they called out to him. Oberlin came running out. Lenz had come to his senses, the full consciousness of his situation returned to him, he felt more at ease. Now he was ashamed of himself and regretted that he had frightened the good people; he told them it was his habit to take a cold bath, and went back to his room. At last exhaustion gave him rest.

The next day all went well. With Oberlin through the valley on horseback; vast mountain slopes contracting from great heights into a narrow winding valley that extended high up into the mountains in many directions; large masses of rock, which grew wider at the base, very little wooded country, but all rising solemn and gray; a view of the west, into the country and the mountain range that runs from south to north with mighty peaks that stand grave or silently motionless, like a dawning dream. Immense masses of light swelling forth from the valleys at times like a river of gold, and again clouds that hung beside the highest summits and then drifted slowly down

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the forest into the valley, or rose and sank in shafts of sunlight like a hovering, silvery specter; no noise, no movement, not a bird, nothing but the now near, now distant flight of the wind. Also there appeared dots, skeletons of huts, boards covered with straw, black, earnest in color. The people, taciturn and grave, as though afraid to disturb the quiet of their valley, greeted them calmly as they rode by.

Inside the cottages it was lively; everyone crowded around Oberlin, who instructed, advised, consoled; trusting glances, prayers everywhere. The people told of dreams, premonitions. Then quickly returned to practical life; paths constructed, channels dug, school attended. Oberlin was indefatigable, Lenz constantly at his side, conversing, attending to business or submerged in the scenery. All of it had a beneficent, soothing effect upon him. Often he was compelled to look into Oberlin's eyes, and the immense repose communicated to us by nature at rest, in the midst of a forest, in moonlit, melting summer nights, seemed even nearer to him in those calm eyes, those reverend, earnest features. He was shy; but he made remarks, he spoke. To Oberlin his conversation gave much pleasure and Lenz's graceful and childish face delighted him. . . .

But only as long as daylight filled the valley could he endure it; toward evening a strange awe took possession of him, he felt like running after the sun; gradually, as objects became more shadowy, all appeared so dreamlike, so antagonistic to him; he was seized with fear, like children left to sleep in the dark, it seemed to him that he was blind. Now his terror grew, the nightmare of madness sat at his feet, the unalterable thought that all was only a dream opened to him; he clung to every object. Shapes passed swiftly before his eyes, he tried to hold them; they were shadows, the life was drained out of him, his limbs were quite paralyzed. He spoke, he sang, he recited passages from Shakespeare, he clutched at everything that at another time would have made his blood flow more quickly, he tried everything, but cold, cold! He had to go out into the open air. What little light he could see strewn through the night, once his eyes had got used to the darkness, made him feel better; he hurled himself into the fountain, the stark effect of the water made him feel better; besides, he had secret hopes of an illness—and now he conducted his bathing less noisily.

But as he got used to his new way of life he grew calmer. He

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assisted Oberlin, sketched, read the Bible; old, discarded hopes reasserted themselves: the New Testament seemed so near to him here. . . . When Oberlin told him how an invisible hand had held him back on the bridge, how on the summit a radiance had dazzled his eyes, how he had heard a voice, how it had spoken to him in the night and how God had wholly entered his heart, so that like a child he would cast dice whenever he did not know what to do: this faith, this eternal Heaven on earth, this being in God—only now Holy Writ became quite clear to him. How close was Nature to the people here, how close all the heavenly mysteries; yet neither violent nor majestic, but still familiar.

One morning he went out. It had snowed in the night; now the valley was filled with bright sunshine, though further away the landscape was half veiled in mist. He soon strayed from the path, up a gentle rise, no more trace of footsteps, a pine forest on one side; the sun was caught in crystals, the snow was light and flaky, here and there the track of wild animals softly imprinted on the snow, leading into the mountains. Not a movement in the air other than a soft breeze or the faint rustle of a bird shaking snow from its tail. All so still and, far above, the trees with swaying white feathers in the deep-blue air. Gradually the scene became familiar to him: the immense, uniform lines and planes, whose aspect sometimes suggested to him that they were addressing him with mighty voices, were shrouded; a familiar feeling as of Christmas crept upon him: sometimes he thought that his mother would step from behind a tree to tell him that all these were her presents to him; she would be tall as in those days. As he descended he saw that a rainbow of rays had gathered around his shadow; he felt as though something had touched his forehead: the created world was speaking to him.

He came down. Oberlin was in the room, Lenz went up to him gaily and told him that perhaps he would deliver a sermon one day. "Are you a theologian?—"Yes."—"Good, next Sunday, then."

Happy, Lenz went up to his room. He was thinking about a text for a sermon and grew pensive, his nights restful. Sunday morning came, the thaw had begun. Clouds gliding past, blue in between. The church stood nearby, up the mountain, on a projection, round about it the churchyard. Lenz was standing up above when the bell pealed and the church-goers, women and girls in their grave black

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costumes, a white folded handkerchief on each hymn-book and a spray of rosemary, came up or down the narrow paths, between rocks, from various directions. Sometimes a glance of sunshine rested on the valley, the warm air stirred slowly, the landscape swam in a sweet odor, distant ringing of bells—it seemed as if everything were being merged in a single harmonious wave.

In the little churchyard the snow was gone, dark moss beneath black crosses; a belated rosebush leaned against the churchyard wall, belated flowers as well from under the moss; sometimes sunshine, then again darkness. The service began, the human voices met in a pure bright chord; an impression like that of looking into a clean, translucent mountain stream. The singing subsided, Lenz began to speak. He was diffident; under the spell of the music his inner convulsions had ceased, but now his whole agony stirred again and settled in his heart. A sweet sensation of infinite well-being came upon him. With those people he spoke simply, they suffered with him; and it was a comfort to be able to bring sleep to eyes that had wept themselves tired, peace to tormented hearts, to turn heavenwards this muted suffering of an existence tormented by material needs. He had become more confident as he concluded—but then the voices struck up again:

Let the holy pain within me
Release deep wells entirely;
Let suffering be all my gain,
Suffering be my service then.

The urge within him, the music, the agony shattered him. The All seemed full of wounds; he felt deep, unspeakable pain because of it. Now for a different life: divine, twitching lips bent over him and attached themselves to his lips; he returned to his solitary room. He was alone, alone! Then the well gushed forth, streams broke from his eyes, he contorted himself, his limbs convulsed in a spasm, he felt as if he were about to dissolve, the voluptuous crisis seemed interminable. At last it grew dark inside him, he experienced a soft, profound compassion for himself, he wept for himself, his head sank down upon his chest, he went to sleep. A full moon hung in the sky; locks of hair fell on his cheeks—so he lay alone, and all was silent and still and cold, and the moon shone all night and hung above the mountains.

Next morning he came down and told Oberlin quite calmly

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how in the night his mother had appeared to him: dressed in white, she had stepped from the dark churchyard wall, a red and a white rose fastened to her breast; she had sunk down into a corner and slowly the roses had overgrown her—she must surely be dead; he was quite untroubled on that account.

In reply Oberlin described to him how he had been alone in a field at the time of his father's death and had heard a voice, so that he knew his father was dead; and when he went home he found that it was so. This led him to speak of other things, he told Lenz of the people in the mountains, about girls who could feel the presence of water and metal underground, about men who on many a mountaintop had been seized and had wrestled with a spirit; he told him also how once, by gazing into the deep void of a mountain pool, he had fallen into a kind of somnambulism. Lenz said that the spirits of the waters had come upon him, enabling him to feel something of his true nature. He went on: the simplest and purest individuals were most closely related to the elements; the more subtle a man's intellectual life and perceptions, the more blunted this sense of the elemental became; he did not consider it an exalted state of mind, because it was not independent enough, but he thought it must give one a sense of infinite bliss to be thus touched by the individual life of every form of creation, to have a soul that would communicate with stones, metals, water and plants, as in a dream to absorb into oneself every being in nature, as flowers absorb air according to the waxing and waning of the moon.

He expressed other ideas; how in all things there was an indescribable harmony, a tone, a blissfulness which in the higher forms required a greater number of organs to externalize themselves, to respond, to apprehend, but that consequently these were the more deeply susceptible; while in the lower forms all was more repressed, more limited, but consequently contained more repose. He pursued this further; Oberlin cut him short, it led him too far from his simple ways. Another time Oberlin showed him some small cakes of paint and explained to him in what manner each color was related to human beings; he produced twelve apostles, each represented by one color. Lenz understood, he spun out the thread even further, fell into fearful dreams, began, like Stilling,[1] to read the Apocalypse and studied the Bible assiduously.

1 See pp. 142-44 for notes.

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At about this time Kaufmann[2] and his fiancée came to the Steintal. At first this visit displeased Lenz; he had, as it were, feathered a little nest for himself, and this little bit of peace was so precious to him. And now someone was coming to see him, somebody who reminded him of so much, with whom he must talk and argue, somebody who knew his circumstances. Oberlin knew nothing about his past; he had put him up, looked after him, had regarded his coming as a piece of providence, for it was God who had sent him this unhappy man; he loved Lenz with all his heart. Besides, Lenz's presence was necessary to everyone there; he belonged to them, as if he had long been with them, and no one asked whence he had come and where he would go.

During the meal Lenz recaptured his good mood; they were talking about literature, he was on his own ground. The idealistic movement was just beginning at that time, Kaufmann was one of its supporters. Lenz ardently opposed him. He said: "Even the poets of whom we say that they reproduce reality have no conception of what reality is, but they're a good deal more bearable than those who wish to transform reality." He said: "I take it that God has made the world as it should be and that we can hardly hope to scrawl or daub anything better; our only aspiration should be to recreate modestly in His manner. In all things I demand—life, the possibility of existence, and that's all; nor is it our business to ask whether it's beautiful, whether it's ugly. The feeling that there's life in the thing created is much more important than considerations of beauty and ugliness; it's the sole criterion in matters of art. Besides, it's only rarely that we find such fullness of life; we find it in Shakespeare; it strikes us with full impact in popular ballads and songs, only sometimes in Goethe; everything else should be thrown on the fire. Those poor wretches aren't capable of drawing as much as a dog's kennel; ideal personages is what they ask for, but all I've seen is a lot of wooden puppets. This idealism is the most shameful contempt for human nature. If only artists would try to submerge themselves in the life of the very humblest person and to reproduce it with all its faint agitations, hints of experience, the subtle, hardly perceptible play of his features. . . ." He himself had tried something of the kind in his "Private Tutor" and "The Soldiers."[3] These are the most prosaic people in the world, but the emotional vein is identical in almost

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every individual; all that varies is the thickness of the shell which this vein must penetrate. All one needs for these things is eyes and ears in one's head. "Yesterday, as I was walking along the edge of the valley, I saw two girls sitting on a stone; one of them was fastening her hair, the other was helping her. Her golden hair hung down; a grave, pale face, and yet so young, and the black dress and the other one so anxiously busying herself. The finest, most intimate pictures of the German school can hardly give us an idea of what this scene was like. Sometimes one would like to be a Medusa's head, so as to be able to transform such a group into stone and show it to people. The girls got up, destroying this fine composition; yet as they were descending between the rocks a new picture was made. The most beautiful pictures, the richest harmonies group and dissolve. Only one thing remains: an unending loveliness that moves from one form to another, eternally undone, eternally changing. Of course one can't always hold on to it, put it into art galleries or bars of music and then fetch the old and the young, let boys and old men chatter about it and be filled with delight. One must love human nature in order to penetrate into the peculiar character of any individual; nobody, however insignificant, however ugly, should be despised; only then can one understand human kind as a whole. The most undistinguished face can make a deeper impression than the mere perception of abstract beauty, and one can allow one's characters to emerge from one's own mind without copying in any of the externals, without adding details in which one feels no life, no muscles, no pulsations beating in response to one's own."

Kaufmann objected that in the real world he would never find the prototype for an Apollo Belvedere or a Madonna by Raphael. "What does it matter?" Lenz replied; "I must confess that they make me feel quite dead. When I'm in a state of great mental activity they could, perhaps, make me feel something, but then I should be doing most of the work. Best of all I like that poet and that visual artist who can reproduce nature for me with the greatest degree of truthfulness, so that I can feel his creation; everything else puts me off. I prefer the Dutch painters to the Italian, because they're the only ones I can grasp. I know only two pictures, and those by Dutch or Flemish painters, that have given me an impression comparable to that of the New Testament: one of them, I don't know who painted it, is Christ

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and the Disciples at Emmaus. When one reads how the disciples went forth, the whole of nature is in those few words. It is a dim, twilit evening, a straight red streak of red on the horizon, half dark in the street; then a stranger approaches them, they speak, he breaks bread; then they recognize Him, in a simply human manner, and the divinely suffering features speak to them distinctly, and they are frightened, for it is now dark and something incomprehensible confronts them; but there is nothing ghostly about their fear, it is as though someone we love and who is dead were to approach us at dusk in his old familiar way; that's what the picture is like, with its surface of monotonous brown, the dim, quiet evening. Then there's the other picture: a woman sitting in her room, a prayer-book in her hand. Everything is dressed in its Sunday best, sand has been strewn on the floor, all homely, clean and warm. The woman has been unable to go to church and she's conducting the service at home: the window is open, she sits inclined toward it, and it seems as if the sound of the village bells were drifting in through the window, across the wide flat landscape; and the singing of the nearby congregation were reaching her faintly from the church, while the woman looks up the appropriate text."

In this fashion they talked on; the others listened attentively, much of what Lenz said impressed them. He had become flushed as he spoke and, now smiling, now serious, shook his blond locks. He had quite forgotten himself.

After the meal Kaufmann took him aside. He had received letters from Lenz's father, who said that his son must go back to assist him. Kaufmann told him that he was idling away his life here, wasting it recklessly, that he should set himself an aim—and more in this strain. Lenz turned on him: "Leave here, leave? Go home? To go mad there? You know I can't bear to live anywhere but in these parts. If I weren't able to go up a mountain at times, to look at the scenery and then go down again to the house, through the garden, and then look in through the window—I'd go mad, I tell you, mad! Why don't you leave me alone? Just a little peace now that I'm beginning to feel almost well again. Go away? I don't understand you, those two words make a mess of the world. Everyone needs something; if he's able to rest, what more could he have? What's the use of continually climbing, struggling, eternally throwing away everything the

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moment gives you, continually suffering so as to enjoy some future state! To be thirsty while a bright spring flows across your path! Here life is bearable to me, and here I'll stay. Why, you ask, why? Simply because that's my will. What does my father want? What can he give me? Impossible! Leave me alone, all of you!" He was hot with anger; Kaufmann left. Lenz was upset.

On the following day Kaufmann wanted to go. He persuaded Oberlin to accompany him to Switzerland. The wish to become personally acquainted with Lavater,[4] whom he had long known by correspondence, decided him. He accepted; they had to spend one day on preparations. To Lenz this was a burden. In order to rid himself of his immeasurable torment he had clung anxiously to every person and thing around him. At certain moments it was clear to him that he was merely deceiving himself; he treated himself like a sick child. Some thoughts, some violent emotions he could not ward off without intense anxiety; then again he would suddenly be driven back to them with boundless urgency, he would tremble, his hair almost on end, until the enormous tension left him exhausted. He took refuge in a vision always hovering in front of his eyes, and in Oberlin whose words, whose face were unutterably soothing to him. So he awaited Oberlin's departure with fear.

The prospect of being left alone in the house at present was dreadful to him. The weather had turned mild, he decided to go with Oberlin into the mountains. On the other side, where the valleys became plains, they separated. He returned alone. He rambled over the mountains in various directions. Vast surfaces sloped down to the valleys, little wooded country, nothing but mighty lines and, further away, the wide, misty plain; in the air, a powerful wind, not a trace of human life other than an occasional hovel—used by shepherds in summer, but now deserted—nestling against the slope. He grew calm, almost, perhaps, as if lost in a dream: everything seemed to melt, merged in a single line, like a rising and sinking wave between heaven and earth; he imagined he was lying on the shore of a boundless ocean that softly rose and fell. Sometimes he would sit down; then move on, but slowly, dreaming. He did not look for a way.

It was dark when he came to an inhabited cottage, on the slope leading down to the Steintal. The door was locked; he went to a

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window, drawn by a streak of light. A lamp illuminated little more than a single point: its light fell upon the pale face of a girl who, her eyes half-closed, slowly moving her lips, rested behind it. Further away in the dark an old woman sat singing out of a prayerbook, her voice harsh and throaty. After much knocking she opened the door; she was half deaf. She served Lenz with some food and showed him a place where he could sleep, but never ceased chanting her song. The girl had not stirred. Some time later a man came in; he was tall and lean, traces of gray hair, with a restless, troubled face. He went up to the girl, she started and became restless. He took a dried herb from the wall and laid its leaves on her hand, so that she grew more quiet and hummed intelligible words in long-drawn, but piercing tones. The man told her how he had heard a voice in the mountains and had then seen sheet-lightning above the valleys; he had been seized bodily too and had wrestled with it like Jacob. He went down on his knees and prayed softly but fervently, while the sick woman sang in long-drawn, softly echoing tones. Then he settled down for the night.

Lenz dozed dreamily, but later heard the clock ticking in his sleep. The rushing of the wind made itself heard through the girl's low chanting and the old woman's voice, sometimes close, sometimes distant, and now bright, now clouded over, dreamlike the moon cast its changing light into the room. At one time the singing became louder, the girl spoke words both definite and distinct: she said that on the rock opposite there stood a church. Lenz looked up: she was sitting upright behind the table, her eyes wide open, and the moon shed its light on her features, from which a ghostly glow seemed to radiate; at the same time the old woman muttered hoarsely, and amidst this changing and sinking of the light, these sounds and voices, Lenz at last fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke early. In the half-light of the room all were asleep, even the girl had found some rest. She was leaning back, her hands folded under her left cheek; the ghostly glow had faded from her face, her expression now was one of indescribable suffering. He stepped up to the window and opened it, the cold morning air struck his face. The house was situated at one end of a low, narrow valley which opened toward the east; red rays shot through the gray morning sky into the half-light of the valley, deep in white mist, sparkled

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against gray stones and pierced the windows of the huts. The man awoke. His eyes met a lighted picture on the wall and remained fixed upon it, without a flicker; now he began to move his lips and prayed softly, then loudly, then more loudly still. Meanwhile some people entered the hut and, without so much as a word, fell upon their knees. The girl was suffering from convulsions, the old woman was rattling out her song, and chatting with the neighbors. The people told Lenz that the man had come to this district a long time ago, no one knew where from, he was reputed to be a saint, he could see water underground and exorcise evil spirits, and people went on pilgrimages to see him. At the same time Lenz discovered that he had strayed further from the Steintal; he left together with a party of woodcutters who were going toward those parts. He was glad of the company; he now felt uneasy in the presence of that powerful man, who sometimes seemed to him to be talking in horrible tones. Also he was afraid of himself when in solitude.

He came home. But the night now past had left a deep impression. The world had been bright, and now he felt in himself a stirring and teeming toward an abyss into which a relentless power was dragging him. Now he was burrowing within himself. He ate little; many nights half spent in prayer and feverish dreams. A violent surging, and then beaten back exhausted; he lay bathed in the hottest tears and then suddenly acquired a strange strength, rose cold and indifferent; his tears seemed like ice to him then, he could not help laughing. The higher he raised himself by his efforts, the deeper down he was hurled again. Once more everything converged into one stream. Recollections of his old state of mind convulsed him and threw searchlights into the wild chaos of his mind.

In the daytime he usually sat in the room downstairs. Madame Oberlin went in and out of the room; he sketched, painted, read, clutched at every diversion, always hurriedly changing from one to another. But he felt particularly drawn to Madame Oberlin's company, when she was sitting there, the black hymn-book in front of her, next to a plant that had been reared inside the room, the youngest child between her knees; also he gave much attention to the child. Once he was sitting like this when he grew anxious, jumped up and began to walk about. The door ajar—then he heard the maid sing,

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unintelligibly at first, later he heard these words:

In this world I have no joy at all
But my sweetheart, and he's away.

This struck home, the words and the intonation almost destroyed him. Madame Oberlin looked at him. He took heart, could no longer endure to be silent, he had to speak about it: "Dearest Madame Oberlin, couldn't you tell me what's become of the lady[5] whose fate lies so heavy on my heart?"—"But Mr. Lenz, I don't know anything about it."

Then he was silent once more and began to pace the room, briskly from one end to the other and back again; but soon he paused to say: "Look here, I'll leave; O God, you're the only people with whom I could bear to live, and yet—and yet I must go, to *her*—but I can't, I mustn't." He was greatly excited and left the house.

Toward evening Lenz returned, the room was in twilight, he sat down beside Madame Oberlin. "You see," he resumed, "when she used to walk through the room, singing half to herself, and every step she took was a kind of music, there was so much happiness in her, and that overflowed into me, and I was always at peace when I looked at her or when she leaned her head against me, and—she was wholly a child; it seemed as if the world were too wide for her, she was so retiring, she would look for the narrowest place in the whole house, and there she'd sit as though all her happiness were concentrated into one little point, and then I thought so too; then I could have played like a child. Now I feel so hemmed in! so restricted! You see, sometimes I feel my arms colliding with the sky; oh, I'm suffocating. And often at those moments I think I'm suffering physical pain, there, in the left side, in my arm with which I used to hold her. And yet I can no longer picture her, the image runs away from me, and that torments me; only at times everything becomes clear and bright and I feel quite well again." Later he often returned to this subject when speaking to Madame Oberlin, but always incoherently; she could not reply at great length, but consoled him a little.

Meanwhile his religious torments continued. The emptier, the colder, the more dead he felt inwardly, the more he was urged to kindle some kind of heat within; he remembered the times when everything seethed within him, when the ardor of all his emotions

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David Riesman and Nathan Glazer

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE DISCONTENTED CLASSES

In the 1930s Maury Maverick, who died this year, was a quite exceptional but far from untypical representative of the Texas political outlook: free-swinging, red-tape cutting, "a man's a man for a' that." Born to a famous Texas name which had entered the common speech, he enjoyed living up to it by defending the downtrodden: the Spanish-Americans of San Antonio; the small businessmen; and, most courageously, the Communists and their right to be heard in the municipal auditorium. In the Maverick era Texas was reputed to be the most interventionist state in the Union, providing some of the firmest support to Roosevelt's foreign policy. Its influential Congressional delegation, which included Sam Rayburn as well as Senator Tom Connally and a less cautious Lyndon Johnson, were Roosevelt's stalwarts as often in domestic as in foreign policy. But not many years later Maverick had turned into a political untouchable, and Texas competed with the North Central isolationist belt in violent opposition to the old Roosevelt policies no less than to the policies of Truman, his successor and legitimate heir. Admiral Theobald's exposure of Roosevelt's "plot" to get us into war by encouraging the bombing of Pearl Harbor is probably taken more seriously in Texas than anywhere else in the United States.

Texas, a state whose wealth and population have greatly increased in the recent past, demonstrates in extreme form the manner in which the psychological hazards of prosperity have helped shift the character of American politics and political thinking since the Second World War. We can date the change even more precisely than that. In the election of 1948, Roosevelt's successor, more unequivocally and guilelessly committed to many New Deal policies and attitudes than F.D.R., won an election against a candidate far more

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liberal and capable, if less appealingly homespun, than Eisenhower. Even as late as the beginning of 1950, the special political tone of the Roosevelt era continued to influence public life. We need only recall the mood of the Democratic Senators investigating McCarthy's charges of Communist infiltration into the State Department early that year. The transcript shows them at ease, laughing away McCarthy's charges, taking it for granted that the country was with them, or at least could not be aroused against them, and that McCarthy was another Martin Dies. Four years later, another group of Democratic Senators sat in judgment on McCarthy. They were tense and anxious, seeking the protective cover of J. Edgar Hoover, trying to seem just as good Communist-hunters—indeed, better Republicans —than any of their colleagues. In the last years of Truman, while many demagogic anti-Communist steps were taken by a reluctant administration—as well as many effective ones under Acheson's bedeviled auspices—the general climate of Washington remained comparatively easy-going, with Congress a partially manageable menace and General Vaughan a venial crony who wouldn't know a Harry Dexter White from an Adolph Berle and couldn't care less.

Many explanations have been offered for what appears to be a decisive shift in the American mind. Fear of the Soviet Union is alleged by some to be the cause; others blame McCarthy, his allies, and his victims; others look for cyclical explanations, while still others think that Americans have abandoned liberal traditions for good and all. In this article, we attempt to estimate the real extent of the shift, to delineate some factors, previously neglected, which may be relevant, and to offer some very tentative interpretations pointing toward the revival of a liberal political imagination.

I

Detectable and decisive shifts of political mood can occur, of course, without affecting the majority. A large proportion, about half, of the population in this country does not vote at all, and probably more than half of the rest vote according to inherited party preference, no matter what.[1] The less educated part of the electorate

1 For data on the negligible influence of political campaigns, see Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (Harpers, New York 1948).

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takes a long time learning to form an opinion about any international matter and as long a time to change it. Thus, the World War II alliance with the Soviet Union did little to alter the suspicion and distrust with which the poor and uneducated regarded Russia—indeed, all foreign countries; these people were "protected" by their fatalism, generalized suspiciousness, and apathy from the wartime messages of the movies, the OWI, and like agencies, so that the later worsening of relations with the Soviet Union found the "backward" strata already holding the now fashionable opinions.

To be sure, the "backward" in America are literate; they have radios and TV and buy newspapers; and to an Asiatic they must appear to move with fabulous speed. Certainly, in non-political matters (where the "voter" has at hand the ready mechanism of a retail store) fashions spread with ever faster waves, and the "backward" buy "modern" in furniture long before they will buy it in elections. Yet it is the educated, who read news columns and news magazines, who have customarily been responsible for the major changes in American political position. For example, the shift of this group from neutrality to intervention in 1940 and 1941 allowed the Lend Lease Act to slip through. It also supplied the cadre under Averell Harriman which then energetically did the actual "lending."

The odd situation today, however, is that such a change does not suffice to explain what happened between 1950 and 1952. Many of the intelligent (i.e., college-educated) and articulate minority still in the main are not unsympathetic to Roosevelt's and Truman's foreign policies. They believe that the alliances with Britain and France must be maintained; they do not regard Communist infiltration as a serious problem; they do regard the threat to civil liberties by Communist hunters as a serious problem. If they do not always say so, this is partly for protective coloration, partly because, as we shall see, they have been put on the defensive not only strategically but also within themselves. (There are of course others of the college-educated who have always hated Truman and Roosevelt, largely for domestic "that man" reasons; they are not averse to using foreign policy as a heaven-sent means of vindication.)

As we have seen, the shift has not been among the inarticulate—they were there already. The decisive factors, we suggest, have been two-fold, and interconnected. On the one hand, the opinion leaders

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among the educated strata—the intellectuals and those who take cues from them—have been silenced, rather more by their own feelings of inadequacy and failure than by direct intimidation. On the other hand, many who were once among the inarticulate masses are no longer silent: an unacknowledged social revolution has transformed their situation. Rejecting the liberal intellectuals as guides, they have echoed and reinforced the stridency of right-wing demi-intellectuals—themselves often arising from those we shall, until we can find a less clumsy name, call the ex-masses.

II

During the New Deal days a group of intellectuals led and legislated for a class of discontented people who had tasted prosperity and lost it, and a mass of underprivileged people who had been promised prosperity and seen enough mobility around them to believe in it. Today, both sources of discontent have virtually disappeared as a result of fifteen years of prosperity, but this same prosperity, and its attendant inflation, has created new sources of discontent. Thus many elderly and retired people cannot adjust financially, politically, or psychologically to the altered value of a dollar—though they have the money, they cannot bring themselves to repair their homes because they have not been brought up to "do it yourself" nor to pay three dollars an hour to someone else for doing it. But among the youth, too, are many people who are at once the beneficiaries and the victims of prosperity, people made ill-at-ease by an affluence not preceded by imagining its reality, nor preceded by a change in character-structure more attuned to amenity than to hardship. The raw-rich Texas millionaire appears often to be obsessed by fears that "they" will take his money away—almost as if he were fascinated by a fatality which would bring him, as it were, back to earth.

These people, whether suddenly affluent or simply better off, form a new middle class, called out of the city tenements and the marginal small towns by the uneven hand of national prosperity; many have moved to the fringes of urban centers, large and small. They have been described in *Fortune* as the new middle-class market, and we can only admire the adaptability of many of these consumers who enjoy higher standards of living with little strain and even a sense

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of fitness. But in politics, these former masses do not have so benign an influence—we shall call them the *discontented classes*. As we have already implied, their discontent is only partially rooted in relative economic deprivation. Many of them, it is true, forgetting their condition of fifteen years ago with a convenient amnesia Freud assumed we reserved for the lapses of childhood, see only that the salaries and income they would once have thought princely do not add up to much. Politically, such people, thinking in terms of a relatively fixed income (in this case, of course, not from capital, save occasional rentals, but from salaries and wages) against a standard of variable expenses, are generally conservative. And their conservatism is of a pinched and narrow sort, less interested in the preservation of ancient principles than in the current reduction of government expenditures and taxes. It is the conservatism we usually associate with provincial France rather than with the small-town venture capitalist of the older Yankee sort. This conservatism helps create the particular posture of the discontented classes vis-à-vis America's foreign role: they are mad at the rest of the world for bothering them, hate to waste money in spankings and cannot stand wasting money in rewards.

But more significant, and more difficult to understand and grapple with, is a discontent which arises from the mental discomforts that come with belonging to a class rather than a mass—discomforts founded less on economic than on intellectual uncertainty. If one belongs to the middle class one is supposed to have an opinion, to cope with the world as well as with one's job and immediate surroundings. But these new members have entered a realm where the interpretations of the world put forth by intellectuals in recent decades, and widely held among the educated, are unsatisfying, even threatening. Having precariously won respectability in paycheck and consumption style, they find this achievement menaced by a political and more broadly cultural outlook tending to lower barriers of any sort—between this nation and other nations, between groups in this nation (as in the constant appeals to inter-ethnic amity), between housing colonies reserved for Negroes and suburbs reserved for whites; many families also cannot stand the pressure to lower barriers between men and women, or between parents and children. When this barrier-destroying outlook of the intellectuals promised economic advance as

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well as racial equality, many of the impoverished could accept the former and ignore the latter. Now, having achieved a modicum of prosperity, the political philosophy of the intellectuals, which always requires government spending, taxes, and inflation, is felt as a threat —and the racial equality, which could be viewed with indifference in the city tenement or homogeneous small town, is a formidable reality in the new suburbs. When the intellectuals were developing the ideology justifying cutting in the masses on the bounties of American productivity, they were less apt to be called do-gooders and bleeding hearts—the grown-up version of that unendurable taunt of being a sissy—than now when the greater part of the masses needing help are outside the nation's boundaries.[2]

Very often, moreover, the individuals making up the discontented classes have come, not to the large civilizing cities, but to the new or expanding industrial frontiers—to Wichita and Rock Island, to Jacksonville or the Gulf Coast, to Houston or San Diego, to Tacoma or Tonawonda. Even those who become very rich no longer head automatically for New York and Newport. Whereas the Baptist Rockefeller, coming from Cleveland, allowed Easterners to help civilize him by giving away his money, as Carnegie and Frick also did, these new rich lack such centralized opportunities for gratuitous benevolence, being constrained by the income tax and the institutionalization of philanthropy. And their wives (whatever their secret and suppressed yearnings) no longer seem to want the approval of Eastern women of culture and fashion; they choose to remain within their provincial orbits, rather than to become immigrants to an alien cosmopolitan center. Indeed, the airplane has made it possible for the men—and *Vogue* and Neiman-Marcus for the women—to share in the advantages of New York without the miseries, expenses, and contaminations of living there. Howard Hughes, for example, can do business operating from a plane, yacht, or hotel room.

All this, however, puts some complex processes too simply. New big money in America has always tended to unsettle its possessors and the society at large. For one thing, the absence of an aristocracy means that there is no single, time-approved course of good behavior.

2 The concept of "intolerance of ambiguity," developed by Else Frenkel-Brunswik and co-workers, is relevant here: these newly prosperous ones want to see the world clearly bounded, in blacks and whites; they have been brought up conventionally, to make use of conventional categories, and fluidity of boundaries threatens their self-assurance and their very hold on reality.

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Though Rockefeller tried philanthropy, he was still hated, still needed the services of Ivy Lee. Yet he lived at a time when the aristocratic model, in Europe if not here, provided certain guide-posts. Today, the enormously wealthy new men of Texas have not even the promise of an assured well-traveled road, at the end of which stand duchesses, Newport, and gate-keepers like Ward McAllister—instead, such men may prefer to buy a television program for McCarthy, or to acquire the publishing firm of Henry Holt, or, on behalf of an anti-Wall Street business demagogue, the very railroad which once helped cement New York "Society."

Moreover, the partial and uneven spread of cosmopolitan values to the lower strata and to the hinterland has as one consequence the fact that rich men can no longer simply spend their way to salvation, for conspicuous underconsumption replaces conspicuous consumption as the visible sign of status; with the result that men who have made enough money to indulge the gaudy dreams of their underprivileged youth learn all too fast that they must not be flamboyant. This is a trick that the older centers of culture have played on the newer centers of wealth. The latter can try to catch up; Baylor and Houston Universities, and the Dallas Symphony, have not done too badly. Or they can enter the still gaudy forum of politics to get back at those they suspect of ridiculing their efforts. Perhaps there was something of this in Hearst, as there is in some of the newer magnates of the media. Senator McCarthy, with his corny charm and his Populist roots, seems made to order for such men; and he has attracted some of the political plungers among the new "underprivileged" rich ("underprivileged" in comparison with what was allowed the rich fifty years ago).[3]

Furthermore, a great many Americans, newly risen from poverty or the catastrophe of the Depression, are much more fearful of losing their wealth than are scions of more established families already accustomed to paying taxes, giving to charity, and to the practice of *no-*

3 It is at this point that the lack of connection between the small cadre of truly conservative intellectuals and any sizable anti-liberal audience becomes a major factor in the present political scene. For patronage politics and for the untutored businessman, writers like Allen Tate or Russell Kirk have nothing but contempt; their conservatism (as writers in PR have pointed out) is based on an irrelevant landed-gentry and professional-class model. With a few exceptions, the pseudo-conservatives who have a radical and nihilistic message for the untutored have to face little intellectual competition, save from occasional socially conscious clergymen and priests.

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blesse oblige. We know many men who made their money in war orders, or through buying government-financed plants, or through price supports, who hate the federal government with the ferocity of beneficiaries—and doubtless want to cut off aid from the ungrateful French or British! Such men cannot admit that they did not make "their" money by their own efforts; they would like to abolish the income tax, and with it the whole nexus of defense and international relations, if only to assert their own anachronistic individualism the more firmly. They are likely to be clients, not only of lawyers who specialize in the capital gains tax, but also of prophets and politicians specializing in the bogeys of adults.

The rapid and unanticipated acquisition of power seems to produce a sense of unreality—people are "up in the air." We face the paradox that many Americans are more fearful today though more prosperous than ever before and in some ways (in the face of the Soviet efforts to "overtake and surpass") more powerful.

III

It is the professional business of politicians to find in the electorate organizable blocs who will shift their allegiance, who will respond with passion in the midst of indifference. In the pre-World War I days of the great outcry against the Trusts, it was possible to find a few old and dislocated middle-class elements which resented the new dominance by big and baronial business. In the '30s, the way had already in large measure been prepared for an appeal to unemployed factory workers and Southern and Western farmers on the basis of Wilsonian and Populist rhetoric, made into a heady brew by more recent infusions of radicalism, native and imported. These discontented masses showed in their voting behavior (in NLRB and Agricultural Adjustment Act elections as well as at the polls) that the appeal, whatever it meant to those who made it, hit home in terms of the listeners' wants and situation.

How can the discontented classes of today be welded into a political bloc? This is the question that haunts and tempts politicians. The uncertainty of the Democrats faced with Stevenson and of the Republicans faced with McCarthy signifies not only disagreements of principle but also doubts as to whether a proper appeal has as yet

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been found on which a ruling or controlling coalition can be built. As geologists cover the earth prospecting for oil, so politicians cover the electorate prospecting for hidden hatreds and identities.

In local elections campaigns can be waged on the promise to hold down taxes and build no more schools. And many people in national affairs will respond to a promise to hold down inflation or to create more jobs. But when voters feel insecure in the midst of prosperity, it is not an economic appeal that will really arouse them. For it is not the jobs or goods they do not have that worry them; indeed, what worries them is often that they do not know what worries them, or why, having reached the promised land, they still suffer. Sharply felt needs have been replaced by vague discontents; and at such a time programs or clear-cut ideas of any kind are worse than useless, politically speaking. This is one reason why the appeal to the discontented classes is so often more a matter of tone than of substance—why a gesture of retroactive vindictiveness like the Bricker Amendment can mobilize angry Minute Women and small-town lawyers, why on the whole the pseudo-conservative right has so small a program and so belligerent a stance. In this situation, ideology tends to become more important than economics.

And when one must resort to ideology in a prosperous America, one must fall back on the vaguely recalled, half-dreamlike allegiances and prejudices serving most people for ideology. Americanism, of course, will play a major role; but, paradoxically enough, so do those underground half-conscious ethnic allegiances and prejudices which, as Samuel Lubell has shown, still play a large part in American politics. In much that passes for anti-Communism these strands are combined, as for instance for many Irish or Polish Catholics whose avid anti-Communism enables them to feel more solidly American than some less fanatical Protestants who, as earlier arrivals, once looked down on them; similarly, a good deal of McCarthy's support represents the comeback of the German-Americans after two world wars. A haunting doubt about Americanism and disloyalty, however, affects not only those of recent enemy or socially devalued stocks but also those many businessmen forced to operate under government regulations of price and materials control, or under defense contracts. As Talcott Parsons has observed, these men are constantly being asked, on grounds of patriotism, to obey government norms which they are

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as constantly opposing and evading; for them it is convenient to discover that it is not they who are ambivalent toward defense, but those others, the Reds or the State Department or the Democrats.

Not all members of the discontented classes come from similar backgrounds or arrive at similar destinations; nevertheless, mobility is a general characteristic. They or their parents are likely to have voted Democratic sometime between 1930 and 1948, and such a memory makes them more susceptible to ideological appeals, for in rising above their impoverished or ethnically "un-American" beginnings, they have found it "time for a change" in identification: they would like to rise "above" economic appeals ("don't let them take it away") to ideological ones—or, in more amiable terms, "above" self-interest to patriotism. Such people could not be brought in one move into the Republican party, which would seem too much like a betrayal of origins, but they could be brought to take a stand "above party"—and to vote for a non-partisan general whom the Democrats had also sought. According to a recent study reported by Professor Malcolm Moos, in two counties outside Boston the self-declared "independent" voters now outnumber the Republicans and Democrats combined—a reflection of this roving backfield of discontented classes which has become the most dynamic force in American political life.[4]

Just as many among the newly prosperous tend at present to reject the traditional party labels (while others seek, perhaps after a split ticket or two, the protective coloration of the GOP), so they also reject the traditional cultural and educational leadership of the enlightened upper and upper-middle classes. They have sent their children to college as one way of maintaining the family's social and occupational mobility. Some of these children have become eager strivers for cosmopolitanism and culture, rejecting the values now held by the discontented classes. But many of those who have swamped the colleges have acquired there, and helped their families

4 According to a study of the 1952 election by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, only two groupings in the population were resistent to these appeals and went more strongly Democratic than in 1948: these were the Negroes on the one extreme of the social spectrum and the college-educated, upper income, and professional and managerial strata at the other extreme—the latter also produced more Republican votes, as the result of a decline in the non-voters. See Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Row, Peterson and Co., Evanston; 1954), Table 5.1.

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learn, a half-educated resentment for the traditional intellectual values some of their teachers and schoolmates represented. While their humbler parents may have maintained in many cases a certain reverence for education, their children have gained enough familiarity to feel contempt. (Tragically, the high schools and colleges have often felt compelled at the same time to lower their standards to meet the still lower level of aspiration of these youngsters, no eager beavers for learning, but too well off to enter the labor force.) In many local school board fights, the old conservative and hence intellectually libertarian elites have been routed by lower-middle-class pressure groups. Once having seen the political weakness, combined with social prestige, of the traditional cultural values, the discontented classes, trained to despise weakness, became still less impressed by the intellectual cadres furnishing much of the leadership in the '30s.

We have spoken earlier of the xenophobia and slowness in altering opinions characteristic of the lower classes. If in a survey people are asked, "Do you think it wise to trust others?" the less educated are always the more suspicious; they have in the course of life gained a peasant-like guile—the sort of sloganized cynicism so beautifully described by Richard Wright in *Black Boy*. In an hierarchical society, this distrust does not become a dynamic social and political factor; except insofar as it prevents the organization of the masses, it remains a problem only for individuals in their relations with other individuals. But when the mistrustful, with prosperity, are suddenly pushed into positions of leverage, attitudes previously channeled within the family and neighborhood are projected upon the national and international scene.

Recent psychoanalytically-oriented work on ethnic prejudice provides possible clues as to why overt anti-Semitism has declined at the same time that attacks on Harvard and other symbols of Eastern seaboard culture seem to have increased. In their valuable book, *The Dynamics of Prejudice,* Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz make the point that in America Jews and Negroes divide between them the hostilities which spring from internal conflict: The super-ego is involved in anti-Semitism, since the Jew is felt to represent the valued but unachieved goals of ambition, money, and group loyalty ("clannishness"), whereas fear and hatred of the Negro spring from id

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tendencies which the individual cannot manage—his repressed desires for promiscuity, destruction of property and general looseness of living. (In Europe, the Jew must do double duty, as the outlet for both id and super-ego dynamisms.) Today, on the one hand, the increasing sexual emancipation of Americans has made the Negro a less fearsome image in terms of sexuality (though he remains a realistic threat to neighborhood real estate and communal values) and, on the other hand, prosperity has meant that the Jew is no longer a salient emblem of enviable financial success. Thus, while the KKK declines the former "racial" bigot finds a new threat: the older educated classes of the East, with their culture and refinement, with "softness" and other amenities he does not yet feel able to afford.

Furthermore, the sexual emancipation which has made the Negro less of a feared and admired symbol of potency has presented men with a much more difficult problem: the fear of homosexuality. Indeed, homosexuality becomes a much more feared enemy than the Negro. (It may also be that homosexuality is itself spreading or news of it is spreading, so that people are presented with an issue which formerly was kept under cover—another consequence of enlightenment.) How powerful, then, is the political consequence of combining the image of the homosexual with the image of the intellectual—the State Department cooky-pusher Harvard-trained sissy thus becomes the focus of social hatred and the Jew becomes merely one variant of the intellectual sissy—actually less important than the Eastern-educated snob. Many people say of McCarthy that they approve of his ends but not of his methods. We think this statement should be reversed to read that they approve of his methods, which are so obviously not sissified, but care little about his ends, which are irrelevant provided that the targets are drawn with the foregoing constellation in mind.

As a result of all this, the left-wing and liberal intellectuals, who led the masses during the New Deal and who played so effective a role in the fight against Nazism and in "prematurely" delineating the nature of the Communist as an enemy, today find themselves without an audience, their tone and their slogans ineffectual.

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IV

Apart from this central social change, much has happened to reduce the intellectuals to a silence only temporarily covered up by the clamor over McCarthy.

First, the success of the New Deal has silenced them. The New Deal as a triumphant movement at once of the "folk," liberal government officials, and the intellectuals, came to an end in 1937. By this time the major reforms, such as the NLRB and Social Security, had already been institutionalized, and many of the remaining unspent energies of the movement were dissipated in the Court-packing fight—nominally waged to preserve the reforms. After this, the crusading spirit could only work on modifications and defenses of an extant structure (for instance, the last major New Deal bill, the Wages and Hours Act of 1938). This vacuum of goals was concealed by affairs in Europe; Fascism in Spain and Germany, and its repercussions in this country, absorbed the New Dealers, the intellectuals, and their allies among the cultivated, and provided them with an agenda. But it was assumed that, once the war was over, the New Dealers and their allies could return to the unending problem of controlling the business cycle and reforming the economy. The business cycle, however, refused to turn down, or did not turn down very far. The one postwar victory based on something like the old New Deal approach and coalition—that of 1948—owed more to the anger of well-to-do farmers at the sag in agricultural prices than it did to the self-interested voting of the city workers. Had the depression come, the alliance forged by Roosevelt might have emerged unimpaired from the wartime National Unity front. But it turned out to be "too easy" to control the business cycle: Keynesianism (at least in the politically palatable form of a "permanent war economy") was no longer esoteric knowledge but the normal working doctrine of administrators, liberal or conservative, and even the Republicans, as was demonstrated in 1953-4, could keep a down turn in the business cycle under control.

What was left on the home front? One could raise the floor under wages, but in a time of prosperity and inflation that could not excite many beyond those, like the Textile Workers Union, who spoke for the worst-paid workers. One could press for socialized medicine, but this had little of the force of the old New Deal campaigns. One

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could denounce Wall Street and the interests, but it looked old-fashioned, and more, it divided the liberal intellectuals from those who, on the issues that still counted, were natural allies. For Wall Street was closer to the liberal intellectuals on the two domestic issues that were still alive—civil rights and civil liberties—and on the whole range of issues related to foreign policy than were the former allies of the liberal intellectuals, the farmers and the lower classes of the city, both in their old form as factory workers and in their new form as white-collar workers.

Indeed, what has happened is that the old issues died, and on the new issues former friends or allies have become enemies, and former enemies have become friends. Thus, the liberal intellectuals have had to switch their attitudes toward Wall Street—as symbolizing both the great financiers and the giant corporations they organize—and toward "small business." By 1940, one could no longer speak of Wall Street as "the enemy." Demographic shifts and the Depression, along with the increasing ability of industry to finance expansion from reserves, had already weakened the hegemony of Eastern capital. The New Deal, by rhetoric and by such legislation as the SEC and the Holding Company Act, weakened it further, in comparison with the growing power of mid-continent businessmen (not to speak of tax-privileged oil and gas men). And the war had the same effect, for the small businessmen and tougher big businessmen of the Midwest paid less taxes and less attention to OPA and WPB. Wall Street lawyers Stimson and McCloy (perhaps Wendell Willkie might be added), Wall Street bankers Forrestal, Lovett, and Harriman, all have had a far greater cosmopolitanism and tolerance for intellectuals than do, for example, the big and little car dealers of the Eisenhower Administration. In general, Wall Streeters, like the British Tories, are a chastened lot—and an easy symbol of abuse for pastoral and Populist simplifications. But, while Harry Hopkins and Tommy Corcoran recruited such men for Roosevelt, many New Dealers and their journalist and intellectual supporters resented their entrance.

They also resented the military, who were frequently similarly chastened men. The liberal political imagination in America, with its tendency to consider generals and admirals hopeless conservatives, and war an outmoded barbarity that serious thinkers should not concern themselves with, was incapable of seeing that military men,

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like Wall Streeters, might be natural allies in the new epoch, and that military issues would become at least as important as the domestic economic issues of the New Deal era. What could be more crucial today than the outcome of the struggle between the Strategic Air Command and the Army Ground Forces? Yet who concerns himself with it? (The self-styled conservatives, being so often isolationists with overtones of manifest-destiny jingoism, have been on the whole even less well prepared to consider such issues.)

By our own very rough count, there were at the 10 a.m. sessions of the American Historical Association one day last December, nearly 1,000 at the colloquium on methodology, an overflow crowd of several hundred to hear Richard Niebuhr and Max Lerner talk about Christian doctrine and American democracy, possibly 150 at a session on mid-nineteenth-century France—and about half a dozen at a meeting on recent military history. Perhaps this lack of interest in warfare has something to do with the "new" way history is taught. This way marks in some respects an advance, and we do not mean in these pages to argue that scholars and intellectuals should shift their interests, as a matter of course, with swings in the political situation—but rather that those devoting themselves to "policy" matters take a more penetrating and prophetic view.

Another new factor in the postwar situation disconcerts the old New Dealers in their search for domestic issues. Thus, it would seem that the political scientists should study, in addition to federal-state or executive-congressional relations, intra-service rivalries and traditions; and, along with government-business relations, the intricate ties between the several armed services and "their" prime contractors. Aside from a few journalists like the Alsops, several able magazine editors, and a handful of academic people like Bernard Brodie and the late Edward Mead Earle, only atomic scientists (and their occasional sociological counselors such as Edward A. Shils) have made serious efforts to grapple with such factors.

Today, the federal defense budget is so large as to leave little room for major socio-cultural argument. As Eliot Janeway has pointed out, we are now in a defense cycle rather than a business cycle; and Daniel Bell, tracing this out in terms of the capital expansion consequences of military commitments, has emphasized how many of the conventional areas of business and social decision are foreclosed. If

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a depression permitting reshaping of political thinking is unlikely, so also is a huge surplus the spending of which could lead to a healthy controversy outside the warring military services and their highly placed civilian partisans. Everywhere we look, then, there is room for change only within a narrow margin, if we interpret change in terms traditional among intellectuals.

At home, indeed, only the cause of racial emancipation remains to arouse enthusiasm. And this cause differs politically from the old New Deal causes in that it represents for many liberals and intellectuals a withdrawal from the larger statist concerns—it is a cause which is carried into personal life and into the field of culture where it attracts many reflective young people who appear apathetic to civic and electoral politics. By its nature, the field of race is one where everyone can have a hand: institutionalization has not proceeded nearly so far as it has with economic underprivilege. Thus, every state has some form of social security, but only a few have an FEPC; and, as many Americans become more sensitive to interpersonal considerations, they feel it imperative to work for the amelioration of racial slights that would not have troubled an earlier generation. But, as we have indicated, the demand for tolerance of Negroes cannot replace, politically, the demand for "economic equality": it is a very great and aggravating demand to make on children of white immigrants who are paying off the mortgage on their first suburban house.

V

Thus, in the postwar era the home front could not be for liberal intellectuals the arena for major policies, mobilizing a majority coalition, that it was in the 1930s; the focus had shifted to foreign policy. But for this the New Dealers and the intellectuals were generally unprepared. In particular, they were not prepared to view the Communists and the Soviet Union as the enemy in the way they had earlier recognized Fascism as the enemy, and for this failure they were to suffer seriously. Not many New Dealers had actually been pro-Soviet: the liberal politicians, lawyers, and civil servants had little in common with Popular Front writers, who were contemptuous of reform and addicted to slogans about Marx, the proletariat, and

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the Revolution. Indeed, the New Dealers were almost too ready to dismiss both the Stalinists and their left-wing sectarian critics; preoccupied with domestic reforms and anti-fascism, they formed no clear-cut image of Communism. They did not sympathize with it, let alone accept it, but they did not see it as a major enemy.

Understandably, they could not be as ebullient in carrying on a policy in which Communism was the major enemy as they could be in attacking depression and the interests. True, they did what was necessary: Truman's Point IV program and the Marshall Plan were the major postwar achievements of the American political imagination. However, these brilliant anti-Communist measures have not succeeded in saving the New Dealers from the taint of fellow-traveling. Moreover, these measures were not able to arouse among intellectuals, and sensitive young people, very much enthusiasm, even in the hearts of those active in administration of the aid programs. For one thing, with the whole planet sending in distress signals, Point IV seems a drop of milk in a rusty Malthusian bucket—to be defended more for what it symbolizes at home than for its often ambiguous blessings (lowered death rates and uncontrollable population growth) abroad. For another thing, all these measures of international hope and help have been launched and caught up in the spirit of cold-war public relations.

No one knows any longer whether he supports a program because it is worthwhile and an expression of humaneness or because it is necessary to harry Soviet satellites or win over neutralists in Europe and Asia. To appear tough-minded vis-à-vis congressmen and Philistines generally, a military "angle" has been discovered in, for instance, the work of anthropologists seeking to mediate the coming of industry to Indonesia. While such practical compromises and dual motives are always involved in reform, in this case they have often served to confuse the reformers, who deny, even to themselves, that they are motivated by anything visionary; hence the intellectual climate becomes less and less open to political imagination.[5]

5 Commenting on an earlier draft of this paper—and we are indebted to such comments for many important revisions—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., reminds us of utopian thinkers still alive and kicking, such as Stringfellow Barr, Clarence Streit, and the United World Federalists. We feel that the spectrum here is not wide or the proposals terribly imaginative; moreover, many of the proposals are counsels of despair, to avoid world catastrophe, rather than of hope, to improve American or planetary life.

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As the hope of solving our foreign problems by indiscriminately and rapidly raising the standard of living of the rest of the world has waned, the more informed critics of contemporary politics have had to fall back on an austerity program—a program promising less and requiring more: more money, more soldiers, more arms, more aid, hence more taxes. All this is required, of course, not for redistribution within America, though a good deal of this does ensue, but to provide a new carrier (it costs as much as a Valley Authority) or a radar early-warning defense (as costly as socialized medicine). This program divides the intellectuals among themselves—many still agitate for socialized medicine—but divides them still more grievously from the poor and uneducated—for the latter, whatever the bellicose consequences of their xenophobia and love of verbal violence, always oppose war and sacrifice.

It is perhaps in reaction to these dilemmas that one new issue—that of the protection of traditional civil liberties—has risen in recent years to monopolize almost completely the intellectuals' attention. But this, too, is an issue which demands sacrifice from the uneducated masses—not financial sacrifice but the practice of deference and restraint which is understood and appreciated only among the well-to-do and highly educated strata.[6] Thus, a focus on civil liberties and on foreign policy tends, as we have seen, to make intellectuals seek allies among the rich and well-born, rather than among the workingmen and farmers they had earlier courted and cared about; indeed, it tends to make them conservative, once it becomes clear that civil liberties are protected, not by majority vote (which is overwhelmingly unsympathetic), but by traditional institutions, class prerogatives, and judicial life-tenure. At the same time, the protection of civil liberties has had to cope with the Communist issue, much as other liberal causes have. The Sacco-Vanzetti case united the liberals; the Rosenberg case divided them. The great civil liberties cases of the post-Enlightenment era were not fought to save the Czar's spies and police from detection and punishment; they were fought for anar-

6 It was evident in the first opinion polls of the '30s that the conventional notion of the rich as conservative and the poor as radical was correct in the realm of government, labor, and distributive policy—thus, the poor have no objection to government ownership—but false in the realm of civil liberties and foreign policy, where the greater impact of mistrust and fear of the strange and the stranger among the poor came to light.

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chists, for socialists and liberals, for professors teaching evolution or economics; and it takes either a case-hardened and sometimes disingenuous naïveté about Communists or a subtle strategic decision about where to draw the line to muster much enthusiasm for the defense of intellectuals who plead the Fifth Amendment. In this situation, the defense becomes at best a rear-guard action, but cannot hope to be a "positive" program—a demand on the basis of which political identities can be reshaped.

Where do the college-bred young stand in all this? In the late '30s they were offered blood, sweat, and tears in the fight against Nazism. Most were ready to accept this burden. But the fight against Nazism was made real by its domestic opponents: one saw almost all that was despicable—anti-Semites, fascists, Europe-haters, the bigoted and the crack-pot—lined up on the pro-Nazi side. Today, the pathetic passel of domestic Communists cannot be compared with these fascists who organized street gangs or shook down businessmen; and many of the Communists' allies are decent, if misguided, "liberals who haven't learned." In international politics, we must accept alliances with despots no more savory than our erstwhile domestic fascists. Thus, the young are asked to fight international Communism not on the basis of street experience but of what they are taught. Cool in spirit generally, they can hardly be expected to show enthusiasm. Indeed, a holding game against the Communists is a reality and a prospect to sober the most enthusiastic. The question of appeasement that most thoughtful Americans could reject offhand in the pre-atom-bomb era now becomes more insistent intellectually even while it becomes outlawed politically.

If we leave substance aside, and consider the tone of politics, we realize that the loss of initiative by intellectuals is coupled with a change of emotional accent. The conservative and ascetic program just sketched is not avant-garde; it is dull; there is no hope in it of saving the world; it assumes that our part of the world is well enough and only wishes the Communists—and the Communist-hunters here at home—thought so too.

Demands are the basis of politics: the demands of a group or class, formulated by its intellectual leaders—or, more accurately, the demands create and identify the group or class which then is led. When a group is either satisfied or exhausted, when for whatever

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reason it no longer makes demands, then it has lost the élan which can attract new forces. It can only hope that the institutions and battalions that have been built up by the vanished élan of the past are large enough to withstand the onslaught of those who do make new demands.

VI

It is not only the dilemmas of policy that have been responsible for the decline of enthusiasm and vitality among the liberal intellectuals in the last decade or so. Another factor is hard to discuss without sounding like E. A. Ross, Henry Pratt Fairchild, and other pre-World War I opponents of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe; yet it seems evident to us that the American crusading spirit has been sustained in considerable measure by the non-conformist conscience of New England and its offshoots in the Western Reserve and the Far West.[7] As long as the new immigrants looked up to this model, they tended to imitate the benign as well as the sharp-shooting doctrines and practices of the Yankees, but in a cumulative process which is only now reaching its end the New Englanders themselves have run out of confidence and prestige: their land is now Vacationland, rather than the source of Abolitionist and other gospel; in the home territory, surrounded by Irish, Italians, Poles, French Canadians, Portuguese whom they have influenced more than either party will admit, they feel defeated and out of control of the charter institutions.

This is not the place to trace the complex relations between the New England conscience and pragmatic reform. The remaining possessors of that conscience are still a national asset, but there are fewer of them proportionately; their wealth is smaller proportionately; and, scattered throughout the country, they are more remote from the centers of ideas. New ideas have their headquarters in New York. They often originate with, or are mediated by, Jews who have more reasons for hesitation and are perhaps psychologically as well as sociologically more vulnerable to pressure than the New Englanders—

7 In addition, the Southern Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, such as Woodrow Wilson, have played a great role, especially in the Democratic and in splinter parties.

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just as the newer media (movies and broadcasting) in which they are influential are weaker in the face of censorship than the older media (book publishing and the press) in which they play less part than the Yankees do. To be sure, there are many affinities between Jews and Puritans—both are people of the Book—and a political and intellectual alliance of the sort that Holmes and Brandeis once typified is still to be found, especially in smaller communities.

On the whole, as Americanization spreads, the old Puritan families have been slowly losing status. Some have responded by eccentricity, leadership, intellectuality, and liberalism; others have joined angry "pro-America" movements—where, ironically enough (save in the DAR), they meet the very Irish or Italian or other newer elements who have displaced or jostled them.[8] Since they can no longer safely snub these ex-Wops, ex-Shanty Irish, or ex-Hunkies, they displace their animus onto the weak targets provided by intellectuals, "left-wingers," "one-worlders," and so on.[9] And they can blame these latter people for the very social changes that have brought the descendants of lowly immigrants into the top councils of what was once, in some areas, the ethnically rather exclusive club of the Republican Party. Their blame, moreover, is not entirely misplaced, for the New Deal, along with the War, did help bring prosperity and mobility and reputability to Catholics and Jews.

After the War, the recognition of the Communist menace still further boosted the status of Catholics by making them almost automatically charter members of the anti-Communist crusade. By the same token, the intellectuals, their limited links with Communism continuously and extravagantly exposed, became more vulnerable. We

8 The Jews, so largely beneficiaries of inflation and gainers of middle-class and professional status, have overwhelmingly remained Roosevelt Democrats, though a kind of "leakage" has provided some of the leadership and newspaper support for the new right.

9 In general, it seems that the non-conformist conscience must be surrounded by other such consciences if it is to remain effective. Thus, the English Methodist who goes to Kenya or Australia is likely to retain the values he went out with, and eventually will come into conflict with his cousin in the Colonial Office who has moved forward intellectually and morally in the Old Country. And similarly, the descendants of the New Englanders who left New England to settle in the Middle West (consider the Tafts) will fall behind the New Englanders left at home; indeed, it is this New England element in the Midwest that Richard Hofstadter, to whose comments on this article we are indebted, sees as upholding reaction there. See his excellent article, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," in the current *American Scholar*.

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believe that Granville Hicks in *Where We Came Out* presents a reasonably just picture of the actual extent of Communist influence in the '30s—an influence much less than is now often supposed even among intellectuals; indeed, his picture does not take sufficient account of the infinitesimal extent of Party effectiveness outside the major seaboard cities. The New Dealers, as we have already said, were even less affected than the intellectuals, but they shared with the latter some personal and journalistic ties; this, plus some dramatic cases like those of Harry Dexter White and Alger Hiss and the belated fellow-traveling of Henry Wallace, made it politically possible—though fantastic—to damn the New Deal as a Communist-front organization. This has created a situation obviously quite different from that of earlier decades, when though liberal intellectuals and New Dealers were also called Communists, they only became as a result firmer and angrier. Today such libel is not only a disaster for public relations but cause for an anxious inner scrutiny. For as it becomes clear that few of the causes liberals have espoused have been immune to exploitation by the Communists, the liberal intellectuals lose their former sure conviction about their causes and are put, inside as well as out, on the defensive. One evidence of this is the strategy of continuous balancing so many of us engage in: if one day we defend Negroes (one of the few causes which, though taken up by Communists, still gets relatively unambiguous attention from intellectuals), then the next day we set the record straight by calling for more aid to Indo-China—not, let us repeat, merely for protective coloration but to make clear to ourselves that we are not fools or dupes of fellow-traveler rhetoric.

In the midst of these perplexities, the liberal intellectuals have discovered that, thanks to the mediators of the mass media, they must today contend with the fact that their ideas, even where relevant to contemporary discontent, are quickly taken over and transmuted into the common stock of middlebrow conceptions; they can no longer control, even by intentional opacity, the pace of distribution. Thus, what they produce soon becomes dissociated from them and their immediate coteries, no longer needs them for distribution and translation, and this leaves them, even when they may reach a wider audience with more dispatch than ever before in history, with a feeling of impotence and isolation. In other words, the intellectuals whose

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function it previously was to see ahead now become as quickly dated as the Museum of Modern Art and other once avant-garde groups. And this situation, too, tends to make them cool and conservative, *for they are caught between alliances with a vanishing proletariat* and with those aristocratic residues who speak the prestige-language of the past—a past in which the capital of one's own ideas was unimpaired by mass-media inflation.

And, finally, the self-confidence of the liberal intellectuals is weakened by their own egalitarian ideology, which has led them not only to attack ethnic and class barriers but to defer to the manners and mores of the lower classes generally. Whereas in the days of Eastern seaboard hegemony the masses sought to imitate the classes, if they sought to rise at all, today imitation is a two-way process, and intellectuals are no longer protected by class and elite arrogance[10] (and the strategic ignorances arrogance protects) against the attitudes of their enemies. We find, for example, the cynicism of the lower strata reflected in the desire of the intellectuals to appear tough-minded and in their fear to be thought naive. Such tough-mindedness in turn may then require acceptance of belligerent and vindictive attitudes in domestic and foreign affairs, and a further weakening of any visionary hopes and motives.

What the left has lost in tone and initiative, the right has gained. The right has believed ever since "that man" entered the White House in the utter deviltry of the New Deal. But what was once a domestic misanthropy has now been writ large upon the globe: the right has hit on what it regards as an unquestioned truth, which needs only to be spread (the utter sinfulness, the total evil, of the idea of Communism and the total perfection of the idea of Americanism); it maintains the zeal of missionaries in propagating this truth; it feels today it possesses a newer, better, altogether more avant-garde knowledge, even though about so limited a subject as the in-

10 We ourselves experienced this problem when we undertook to write a criticism of Norman Dodd's semi-literate report as Staff Director for the Reese Committee investigating foundations. It seemed legitimate enough to attack the report's crackpot notion that the socialists and the foundations had been plotting together to take over American education and the federal government. But we then had misgivings about pulling the rank of our own education and relative fluency and withdrew our original comments on the style of the report.

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fluence of Communists on American culture and politics (look at *The Freeman* and *The American Mercury,* or at *McCarthy and His Enemies* for illustration). Moreover, this new right possesses that convenient and perhaps essential feeling of martyrdom which its very presence gives to many liberal intellectuals: it sees itself as a minority suffering for its desire to enlighten the people (Peter Viereck has referred to the "bleeding hearts of the right").

But the parallel is far from complete. For the left and the liberals in their days of influence really wanted something: they had specific reforms in mind, and specific legislation. The new right, with its few intellectuals trying to create a program for it, wants at best an atmosphere: it really has no desire to change the face of the nation; it is much more interested in changing the past, in rewriting the history of the New Deal, of the Second World War and its aftermath, or, in more ambitious efforts, of the whole modern movement. Here again the comparison of the new right with the Communists is instructive, for the latter too, in this country have been preoccupied with a state of mind: they have aimed to make Americans sympathetic to the Soviet Union, or at least unsympathetic with its enemies here and overseas. To this end, their greatest efforts have been in rewriting recent and current history, in presenting a certain picture of the world in which big business, on the one side, supported fascism and anti-Semitism, while the Soviet Union, on the other side, protected Negroes, Jews, and other minorities, and defended the working class. American domestic politics have been useful to the Communists in providing object-lessons for this general theory and in recruiting stalwarts for its further propagation. In the same way, one can read or listen to the organs of the new right and find nothing that amounts to a legislative program: the bills they want passed are those which give expressions to their feelings about the past, such as the Bricker Amendment, or withdrawing Hiss's pension and otherwise harrassing Communists (often in ways that such veteran Communist-hunters as Governor Dewey think unjust and unwise)—the fight for these measures is an educative fight in re-interpreting the past. When it comes to coping with world Communism, this group has nothing to propose in the way of strengthening anti-Communists abroad—nothing but withdrawal or muted quasi-suicidal hints of preventive war. In fact, the hatred this group feels for the modern world, as mani-

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fested at home, in America, is so huge that there is little energy left over for the rest of the globe—rather, there is an aimless destructiveness in which legislative and local battles simply focus and dramatize resentment.

Nevertheless, this group now possesses the enthusiasm and momentum previously held by liberals. Its leaders cannot channel discontent; they can interpret it: they can explain why everything has gone wrong—for the while, that is enough. Thus, the picture today in American politics is of intelligence without force or enthusiasm facing force and enthusiasm without intelligence.

How much longer can this pattern last? International developments will probably be determinative—the belligerence coupled with isolationism of this rightist group may tempt or frighten the Soviet Union into further adventures and incidents, finally touching off a war of annihilation (we think this most unlikely, and assuredly not inevitable). But the present leadership of the discontented classes has to do more than symbolize their disorientation and lack of satisfying political loyalties if it is to solidify new allegiances. For this, no intellectual reserve of demands appears in the offing. Instead, the leadership is continually subject to the temptation to fall back on the more developed intellectual positions of laissez-faire or of various brands of fascism—but these, it knows, will lose them much of their potential following, which is neither conservative in the older free enterprise sense nor on the look-out for, though tempted by, civil commotion and foreign adventure. It is not surprising that Congress represents the peak of strength of this group, since Congress is a sounding-board for mood—and an extraordinarily democratic one—as much as it is a machine for pork-processing and bill-passing. A tone, however, soon becomes monotonous and, if not institutionalized when at its shrillest, fades away.

In sum, the earlier leadership by the intellectuals of the underprivileged came about through a program of economic changes; and this program demonstrated an ability in the leaders to interpret the situation of the unorganized workers, of minority groups, and of marginal farmers. Today, a different group of classes (including many of these former underprivileged groups, now risen to middle-income status) wants something, but their wants (partly for the very reason that these people are now above subsistence or disfranchisement) are

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much less easily formulated. These new groups want an interpretation of the world; they want, or rather might be prepared to want, a more satisfying life.

It is the unsatisfying quality of life as they find it in America that mostly feeds the discontent of the discontented classes. Their wealth, their partial access to education and fuller exposure to the mass media—indeed, their possession of many of the insignia they have been taught to associate with the good life—these leave them restless, ill at ease in Zion. They must continually seek for reasons explaining their unrest—and the reasons developed by intellectuals for the benefit of previous proletariats are of course quite irrelevant.

Is it conceivable that the intellectuals, rather than their enemies, can have a share in providing new interpretations and in dissipating, through creative leadership, some of the resentment of the discontented classes? What kind of life, indeed, is appropriate to a society whose lower classes are being devoured faster by prosperity than Puerto Rican immigration can replenish? We have almost no idea about the forms the answers might take, if there are answers. But we do recognize that one obstacle to any rapprochement between the discontented classes and the intellectuals is the fact that many of the latter are themselves of lower-middle-class origin, and detest the values they have left behind—the dislike is not just one way. They espouse a snobbery of topic which makes the interests of the semi-educated wholly alien to them—more alien than the interests of the lower classes. Only in the great new melting pot of the Army would there appear to be instances where intellectuals discover that individuals in the discontented classes are "not so bad," despite their poisonous tastes in politics and culture—instances where the great camaraderie of the male sex and the even greater one of the brass-haters bridge the gaps created by the uneven development of social mobility and cultural status. Of course, to suppose that the intellectuals can do very much to win friends and influence people among the discontented classes is as ridiculous as supposing that Jews can do much to combat political anti-Semitism by amiability to non-Jews. Nevertheless, there is only one side from which understanding is likely to come, and that is their own.

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Francis Golffing

THE ALEXANDRIAN MIND: NOTES TOWARD A DEFINITION

> Nature has given man the power to destroy himself—a power which keeps increasing in proportion to his hunger for life, as the latter rushes away from him day by day. Once our power of destruction grows infinite—so that the moment of our birth spells our own funeral—our hunger for life too will become boundless; quite naturally so, because we have never been alive.
>
> —Silvio Tissi, *L'Ironia Leopardina*

If we read the state of mind of the modern Greek as a metaphor for the attitudes of modern Western man (and poetry of such probity and range as that of C. P. Cavafy[1] encourages us to do this) we shall be furnished with a map, as complete as we could wish, of our contemporary preoccupations. That state of mind may be defined, indifferently, as Byzantine or Alexandrian; but since the poet himself would doubtless have preferred the latter term, and since that term has the further advantage of having passed long since into common speech, I shall employ it in the following discourse.

The epithet *Alexandrian,* used loosely enough nowadays, though perhaps never without a certain show of justice, seems hardly to require much explanation. It describes the temper of a time—any time—consequent upon the flowering of strict value systems; the attitude entertained, most clearly by the best minds and dimly by the rest, in the face of that irregular luxuriance which one knows, now, to have been one's past—inherited, yes, but neither wholly nor quite purely enough; and earned, as one might earn a punishment. For, by the constant irony of history, this is what our richest rewards must

1 Constantine Cavafy was born in Alexandria in 1863. Most of his life was spent in government jobs: a calling which may explain both the bias and the references of many of his poems. He started his literary career about 1908 and continued writing steadily until his death in 1933; published little and that little privately. He is now generally regarded as the foremost Greek poet of this century. His poems have been translated by John Mavrogordato and were published here in 1952 by the Grove Press.

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inevitably turn to, allowing us not even the paltry comfort of squandering them. It seems, indeed, as though they had never been truly ours, or only in the sense in which Tantalus may have claimed the tree to be his. The flow of experience from past to present is strangely interrupted, and the mind, exhausted by former richness or what passes for such, becomes fixed on the immitigable indigence of the present.

Considerations of this sort cannot fail to organize themselves into a system of responses, varying with the temper of each social group (indeed with the temperament of each individual) yet generally stable. Thus the attitudes of an age are engendered, presently to be tabulated or codified in the works of its leading artists and philosophers. The following pages are based on the assumption that Alexandrianism is endemic to the total pattern of Western culture; that it has made certain of its major phases both determinate and effective. It is viewed, then, as a recurrent attitude toward history, not a phenomenon of purely local origin and import; as a position gained through stress and discord, not an experience passively undergone. (Most historians have tended to treat it in exactly these negative terms: either as a unique hybridization of Western and Eastern culture combining the vices of both but none of the virtues, or else as the slack of the wave in a cyclical process.) My choice of Cavafy, a contemporary poet born and bred in Alexandria, as an example is a pragmatic choice, to be sure, for in him all my central concerns are focused, but by no means a fortuitous one; nor yet one which can be written off as too 'special.' For though the *thema probandum* might have been dramatized through the use of such figures as Callimachus or Lycophron (or, for that matter, Pound or Eliot), Cavafy's geographical and historical situation, taken in conjunction with his thematic material and method, provides the inquirer with a more fortunate arena for working out the dialectic peculiar to the subject. The tensions and incongruities of what I consider to be the Alexandrian mind are here sparked by the pseudo-congruities of place and tradition; the values denied (or maintained) by the poet are the selfsame values that were once maintained (or denied) *in the language;* while his being a contemporary not only gives Cavafy a much vaster perspective on the past than any Hellenistic poet could command but also makes him directly available to us. Thus discourse

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has been stripped of much random complexity by the introduction of seemingly simple conditions—conditions almost 'ideal' in the laboratory sense. The example of Cavafy shares the virtues—as well as the limitations—of all extreme cases adduced in proof of a position: the reader is free to apply what seems to him valid in these reasonings to cases less patent or 'pure' yet nevertheless as germane to the type as this modern Greek poet. My business here is to enumerate some of the strands which in their entirety compose the difficult web of Alexandrian attitudes and to support, whenever necessary, my contentions from the text in hand.

Marginal Hold on History; Passivity Toward Experience

All experience is viewed as essentially historical, that is to say as flowing through the subject toward an unspecified term. But though the subject remains passive, he is no longer content to be merely part of the waters; rather, like the pile of a bridge, he obstructs, and by obstructing divides them. He has become the point of resistance to history and so of history's bifurcation and temporary dispersion. Yet history remains withal the center of man's fascination: it is undergone in the form of fantasy or nightmare and constantly made to relate to the moment through a process of wry accommodation. The adventures of the past are made to look (contrary to the tradition of the textbooks) as though they were happening today: unheroically, opportunely. The hero who is both clever and persevering—Ulysses[2] being of course the great exemplar—emerges as the archetypal hero of the doctored myth. In the social realm, too, a premium is placed on endurance while virility, ready action, are held in slight esteem. Every Alexandrian age professes a deep skepticism in the matter of political ends, together with a fastidious disdain for rough means. The maxim *Wait and See* (witness its elegant oriental elaborations in Eliot) comes to be elected as the maxim fit to govern all conduct.

Rejection of Pain or What Might Induce Pain

This may be conveniently examined by perusing the text. It is characteristic that in Cavafy's poetry the dramatic-narrative pieces

2 Shrewd as he was in his actions, Ulysses was even more resourceful in his speech; to a considerable extent, his speeches *were* his actions. Such an exceptional accomplishment must endear him to every Alexandrian.

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are regularly relieved by hectic recollections of outlawed sexual pleasure snatched furtively by the poet. The former are based on a doctrine of minimum pain, the latter on one of maximum pleasure: the same hedonistic doctrine, really, although through the historical perspective, never entirely abandoned, a small measure of necessary conflict is allowed such personages as prefigure the modern poet. In other words, it is conceded that our forebears were slightly more heroic than ourselves, that with the passing of each generation there occurs a further attrition of the traditional manly virtues.

Prudence Becomes the Supreme Rule of Conduct. The Dangers of the Sea Lend Spice, Prospectively, to the Tedium of the Safe Harbor

As life grows more decorous, poetry—hand in hand with life—abandons energy for decoration. The exquisite craftsman who fashions his own life as though it were a poem appears as the constant protagonist of so much contemporary verse, and most signally of the verse of Cavafy. The spheres of action and contemplation, most rigorously distinguished in the past, are now readily collapsed into one: to remember imaginatively is to *act* . . . to act, that is, as well as circumstances permit. All procedures, henceforth, are prudent procedures; and all action described as moral is seen to be no more than procedure. Such overt action as is still maintained has one function only: to lead up to retirement, to the Voltairean cultivation of one's backyard; it is recommended to the seeker as adding relish to his final retreat. Thus we are brought round once more to the hedonistic bias, that bias which Cavafy has expressed so movingly in his poem, "Ithaka":

> *Setting out on the voyage to Ithaka*
> *You must pray that the way be long,*
> *Full of adventures and experiences . . .*

and so on, until the arch of the poem closes ominously:

> *Ithaka has given you your lovely journey,*
> *Without Ithaka you would not have set out.*
> *Ithaka has no more to give you now.*
>
> *Poor though you find it, Ithaka has not cheated you . . .*

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Yes, it has; for expecting to find a small derelict polity, Ulysses has only found a hole fit to die in.[3]

The reader need not be told how utterly different this attitude is from the one expressed in Tennyson's *Ulysses*. But it might be worth pointing out that in "Alexandrian" poetry the dramatic character (whether mythological or otherwise) becomes not only more disabused and meaner but more complicated as well. Tennyson's Ulysses still speaks regally, in his own voice; the hero of Cavafy's poem is admonished, through the mouth of the poet, not to mind his eventual return to the drab island which, after all, has served its purpose as a jumping-off place. The fact that Cavafy's hero stands as fully for himself as Tennyson's did for the earlier poet does not obliterate the difference but, on the contrary, makes it all the more striking. For the voice, half hectoring half cajoling, which in the later poem addresses the hero's own conscience carries no suggestion of either triumph or resignation: behind the accents of evening glow and tranquil remembrance we are made to sense, as everywhere in this poet's lines, the murk of quiet desperation.

Cosmopolitanism

The literary cosmopolitanism of every Alexandrian age flows directly from its peculiar attitude toward history. It will invariably take one of two shapes which, on the face of it, seem quite dissimilar. It will either move toward a cunning compounding of idioms (see the breaking down of linguistic frontiers in the work of Joyce, Pound and, to a lesser extent, Eliot) and so result logically in some sort of polyglot marquetry work; or else it will introduce the one supreme language (the *koine*) into one 'barbarous' province after another. Each process seems the inverse of the other, since the first uses the borrowing, the second the colonizing strategy. Yet what underlies both is a single conviction: the conviction that national and racial boundaries are futile or vicious; that since the language of mankind is ideally one, it must be made so in actual fact; and that, since the historical process is too slow and unpredictable, it must be made so by fiat. Of the two methods, that adopted by Rome and Greece seems

3 Since the Alexandrian has no home other than language, it does not matter whether Ithaka is read as the "real place" and the places touched by Ulysses on his voyage as "phantasmagoria," or the other way round.

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doubtless the more attractive, though it is hardly one that recommends itself to contemporary practice. In any event, it is the method quite naturally endorsed, and celebrated in poem after poem, by Cavafy. Here language, while still vaunted as the grand repository of actions, begins slyly to assert its claim to being itself the *supreme human action*;[4] and language of course stands for *Greek,* even as *Greek* stands for the collective consciousness (and conscience) of civilized mankind. This consciousness is most frequently expounded through the characters of scholars and poets, less often through those of men of affairs; yet since that distinction is, to the Alexandrian mind, but one of degree (the shaper of word or stone being simply the shaper of policies raised to the highest power) we should not make too much of that bias: only enough to realize that to a writer like Cavafy the kind of action which, on the traditional view, is the least "active," is also the one which affords the richest instruction and so deserves closer attention than any other.

"The Unlucky Cause Has the Approval of Cato"

This leads us on to the next consideration: the tenderness of the Alexandrian mind for every form of defeat. The gods may smile upon the victor; not so the poet or historian of an era which has learned to identify success with barbarism or, at the very best, with malpractices of one kind or another. The Alexandrian writer is driven to look for areas on which he may expend his compassion; and since the floor of history is strewn with victims, he will never lack for subjects. Cavafy manages to crowd his pages with every conceivable variety of failure: able executives pining away in some dreary province; poets *manqués* or killed by dissipation; young, charming, effete rulers of puppet states; artists destined for great things yet forced,

4 There are interesting connections between Cavafy's attitude toward language and Mallarmé's Byzantinism and "byzantine" language cult, which I hope to develop elsewhere.—It might be observed at this point that every Alexandrian age shows the same divorce between the primitive "doers" of deeds and those who study or appreciate them. The process is one of graduated removals and takes different forms according to the stratum of society in which it occurs. Take the situation of the contemporary "middlebrows." Some learn about Augustus through a biography, others through a review of that biography, others yet through a title they chance upon in a second-hand book catalogue. These last, though obviously at the farthest remove from the original event, are also the most "refined" appreciators of Augustus: his name stands for everything he has done and so makes any knowledge of his character and career redundant.

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through the pressure of circumstance, to stoop to the "small thing well done." The causes of failure are as various as the failures themselves; they range from the Great Refusal to that momentary failure of nerve which may decide a man's, or a nation's, entire career. Here the Trojans provide the great historical paradigm, made doubly poignant by the fact of their all-but-success. The poem called "Trojans" is one of the finest in Cavafy's collection, and one of the most straightforward in its identification, as the very outset, of the luckless tribe with our own generation.

In our misfortunes our exertions are,
All our exertions, like those of the Trojans.
We do succeed a bit; and then a a bit
We're ready to take on; and we begin
To have some confidence and some good hopes.

But something always turns up and stops us.
Achilles in the trench in front of us
Starts up and with loud shoutings frightens us . . .

It should be noted that moral considerations do at no point enter the simple victor/victim antinomy, whose terms are furnished exclusively by temporary and, so far as the writer is concerned, arbitrary power constellations.[5] The victim is *ipso facto* deserving of pity; the victor of censure, if not of abhorrence.

The Curious Byways of History—Corruption

Just as he approves action only at the points where it passes into inaction, so does the Alexandrian writer cherish only those passages of history that are least "historical," i.e. momentous: the quiet backwaters skimmed by flies, where time seems to have stood still; the countries, shadowy and perhaps a trifle shady, on the confines of myth and fable. These too are failures of the actual which the poet must turn—as he did his *ratés* and exiles—into triumphs of the imagination. The empathy of the Alexandrian is strictly proportional, it would seem, to the pathos of his subject. This is true even of so "wholesome" a writer, comparatively speaking, as Wallace Stevens; it

5 Yet there are sheepish suggestions, in Cavafy as in most Alexandrian writers, that the victim is undone by his own sensibility rather than by the insensibility of others.

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is certainly true of Cavafy, who would be wholly out of patience with soundness were it not for the chance, never to be discounted, of spotting the hidden taint that denies it. For beauty, he knows, depends on agony, mortification, to be made manifest. From this there is only one step to considering beauty and agony synonymous; and once we are aware of that identification, and of the process of thought that led to it, the filiations of Alexandrianism with both the Christian and the Romantic temper become abundantly clear.

This love for beauty-in-agony comes to be associated quite naturally in the Alexandrian mind with an unashamed love for corruption. Civic corruption is seen as the public counterpart of that intimate corruption which wastes the body and destroys the heart; and since we are inexorably committed to either, we must try to discover the secret attractions of both.[6] At first, collusion with the evil powers around us may seem nothing more than an awkward necessity, but it soon turns into a game having its own code and its peculiar set of satisfactions.

No strict line is drawn, now, between pleasing one's own body, the lovely and diseased body of one's wretched lover, and the corrupt body of officials on whose favor one's survival depends: it is all part of the same agony and so of the same, scarcely tolerable, beauty. Should the sordidness of the operation, as well it might, threaten to cheapen the agony and so eclipse the beauty, there is always Language waiting in the wings, ready to step out onto the scene and redeem it:

This fatal city, this Antioch
Has eaten up all my money:
This fatal city with its expensive life.

But I am young and in excellent health.
I have a wonderful mastery of Greek,

which mastery shall presently avail the debauched young Syrian—or such is his hope—in his suit for preferment. The executives to whom he prepares to apply are utterly worthless; there are no others. But this is in the nature of things, and if he has no choice in the

6 Neither the Christian nor the Romantic would, of course, follow this "logic of metaphor." It is here that the Alexandrian mind comes truly into its own, entering the realm not only of opportunism but also of experimental crime and the *acte gratuit*.

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matter the reason is simple: there are no choices anywhere, ever; as the body is ruinous from the start, so is the commonwealth as he knows it:

And my conscience is easy
As to the indifference of my choice.
All three of them do to Syria the same amount of harm.

But I'm a ruined man, it isn't my fault.
I have misfortunes and I'm trying to mend them.
The almighty gods ought to have seen about
Creating a fourth man and an honest one.
I should have been delighted to work with him.

No further thought is wasted, however, on that fictitious "honest" man. A world so neatly divided between knaves and fools is "sufficient" to the Alexandrian mind, which knows that it is to be sacrificed on some altar or other and whose only fear is that it might have to bleed, perhaps through its own mistake, with the fools. At this point the Alexandrian's power of will, all but atrophied as we have seen, is called into action once more: he refuses with every ounce of strength that is left him to die the wrong death.

Values Become Indifferent. The Heir in His Pride

The Alexandrian is convinced of the fundamental equivalence of all moral values. This means that together with the notion of *summum bonum* there also went below the horizon that of *summum malum*: a fact from which he derives not so much comfort as pride; a justified pride. For it is due to him, he feels, that the ghost of radical evil, or hell, was laid which haunted his elders; rid of their heady hopes, he is rid of most traditional fears as well. Such emotions as he has kept come to be centered exclusively round the main chance, his private allotment of pleasure and pain. He is not denying life, as his enemies claim, but only life as his forebears conceived and lived it; nor is he unwilling to take the consequences of that refusal: *He never repents who has once denied;/ He would say No again, if he were tried./ Yet that proper No all his life subdues him.* In the language of an obsolete system he might be charged—and actually will be so charged, over and over—with the sin of *superbia*. But the

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advocates of that code mistake his problem which is not one of perversity but of conversion: how to turn the cumulative disadvantage of history into a moderate kind of advantage; how to appease the furious crimes of past ages which still agitate in his bloodstream. There are times when the advent of another wave of barbarians—those convenient purgers of the past—seems to offer a solution, but velleities of this sort cannot last. For he knows, deep down, that the dreaded and hoped-for barbarian will turn out to be but a sanguine, and sanguinary, species of Alexandrian, moved by passions which the better elements of the age have been patient enough to examine, and prudent enough to put by. Even more likely, he is a mere fiction: *Some people have arrived from the frontier;/ They said there are no Barbarians any more,* and to entertain fictions is, to the Alexandrian, the unpardonable sin.

I have said earlier that the Alexandrian, contrary to the claim of his detractors, does not reject life; I should add now that he loves it insatiably, and "quite naturally so, for he has never been alive." The film of the past, including his own, rushes furiously past his eyes and his fondest wish is to stay it: at the risk, even, of being quite overwhelmed by the frozen dumb show. This wish must remain barren of fulfillment, for history, as we have seen, though it extends endlessly away from him in either direction cannot contain him; nor can he in any way be said to have a share in its actions.[7] The "proud heir"—proud because standing apart, as does the bridge from the river—is bound to feel cheated of a fortune that he has been reluctant to examine for its worth and so shall never resign. For, with history gone, what would be left? He is no mystic, though like Eliot he may try that mask among others; nor can he return to those lapsed doctrines which by removing history's sting kill its power as well—the power it has, and will always maintain, over the imagination.

7 In one sense, then, history has a supreme meaning for the Alexandrian; in another, no meaning at all. Some time ago an engineer in Los Angeles devised a very complicated machine which, while functioning to perfection, fulfilled no function whatever. I quote from the Italian newspaper where the story appeared: *"Si tratta di un straordinario congegno che ha chiesto al suo costruttore anni di ricerche e che si compone di più di 700 pezzi tra pulegge, bielle, ruote, catene e ingranaggi perfettamente oliati. L'apparecchio si mette in marcia e si arresta a volontà, ma all'infuori di questo non compie alcun lavoro utile. Non riesce neppure a produrre rumore."* In his darker hours the Alexandrian might view history as such a machine; the only difference being that, unlike Mr. Walstrom's construction, history manages to produce a great deal of noise.

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G. L. Arnold

THE AFTERMATH OF WAR AND THE END OF THE NEO-LIBERAL UTOPIA*

I Lost Horizons

Few of those who have followed with attention the course of events since the Second World War ended in 1945 can fail to have been struck by the extraordinary discrepancy between the hopes fashionable at the time and the actual development we have witnessed. There is today an obvious temptation to conclude that the disillusionment which so swiftly followed the adoption of the United Nations Charter was no more than the recoil to be expected when utopian plans were brought into contact with reality. But what is so remarkable is the extent to which experienced statesmen, diplomatists, and other public figures shared in the movement which first led to San Francisco, and then away from it to the Atlantic Pact, Korea, and the tacit acceptance of atomic and air power ("retaliatory power" in the current idiom) as the only real guarantees of peace—or rather, of the absence of total war: for to this modest aim have the bright promises of 1945 shrunk in the intervening ten years.

It was doubtless an omen that while the façade of world government was being erected at San Francisco, the real business of settling the fate of Europe was accomplished at Potsdam, and that the principles proclaimed in one locality had no evident bearing upon the decisions taken or condoned in the other. Thus the uprooting of some ten million Germans, to facilitate the westward advance of Poland's frontiers, and the subjection of all Eastern Europe to Soviet control, clearly were not actions that could be justified by any interpretation, however elastic, of the liberal philosophy underlying

* The first chapter of a book entitled *Pattern of World Conflict,* to be published by Dial Press this spring.

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the Charter. And it is arguable that the same might be said of the decision, also taken at this time, to employ the first two atomic bombs for the purpose of studying their effect upon human habitations. But these lapses from grace could still be regarded as familiar instances of the tension between general aims and particular methods. What weighs more heavily in the scales, now that the 1945 settlement has disclosed its consequences, is that the aims themselves appear to have had only a very limited relation to the facts.

The casual manner in which the Potsdam decisions canceled ten centuries of European history (incidentally sanctioning mass expulsions, spoliations, and killings exceeded in scale only by Hitler Germany's own accomplishments) was already a sign that control had slipped from those who in former times had seen to it that European wars were conducted for limited objectives, and brought to an end with the minimum of disturbance to Europe's general equilibrium. At the Potsdam conference Great Britain appeared for the last time as one of the Big Three, on an equal footing with the United States and the Soviet Union. At most succeeding international conferences Britain was accompanied by France, and it gradually became clear that, save on those rare occasions when she could rally the whole Commonwealth, her status was that of a Western European country allied to the United States, rather than a "third" center of power lying outside the American and Russian orbits. But at Potsdam the wartime Big Three still met on equal terms, and the British Government once more attempted, though without success, to perform that moderating role which Wellington and Castlereagh had exercised at the close of the Napoleonic epoch, and which corresponded as much to Britain's tradition as it did to Europe's interest. That so little real weight was placed behind this effort must be debited to Churchill's obsession with the Anglo-American partnership, and to the mediocrity of his Labor colleagues-and-successors who, by their behavior on this crucial occasion, gave advance notice of the fundamental helplessness they were to display during six years in office. But the real authors of the settlement were of course the United States and the Soviet Union, and their motives were all too clear. On the Russian side, the wartime fusion of chauvinist and revolutionary sentiment into the new imperialist amalgam led to a policy of conquest which pushed the frontiers of the Soviet Empire as far west as they would

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go, uprooting or steamrollering everything that stood in the way. On the American side, Roosevelt's policy—never acknowledged in so many words, but implicit in all his actions—of reaching an understanding with the USSR at the price of the permanent partition of Central Europe, was at first continued after his death, and indeed came to its full flowering at a time when its presuppositions were already beginning to crumble. Thus the British attempt to moderate the destructive urge of the victors and preserve something of the old European framework encountered resolute resistance from the Russians, and at best obtained only very lame support from the Americans, who were just beginning to wonder whether the wrecking of Germany, and the transfer of Eastern Europe to Soviet control, were really in everyone's best interest. In the circumstances, Britain's halfhearted resistance was foredoomed to failure, the more so since the Polish bastion had already been surrendered at Teheran and Yalta. But the fact that the newly elected Labour Government, whose leaders replaced Churchill and Eden in the middle of the conference, confirmed the decisions of their predecessors, instead of instantly dissociating themselves from so gross a travesty of wartime promises and declarations, lent additional significance to these transactions by giving them a kind of moral sanction. After Potsdam it was difficult to maintain that any sizable body of opinion in the Western world was prepared to act on principles radically different from those professed and practiced by the Kremlin. Liberalism and socialism had both been compromised, along with their totalitarian ally and enemy-to-be. This display of moral indifference was not widely commented upon at the time; its effects only showed at a later date, when the outbreak of the cold war led to renewed emphasis upon the general principles so widely proclaimed by the Western democracies during the earlier, and militarily unfruitful, part of the war.

The old balance of power having thus been destroyed, it was clearly urgent to establish a new one, for only the more naive votaries of perpetual peace could imagine that the San Francisco Charter by itself would make an end of conventional diplomacy. Here the Western powers were at first favored by their short-lived monopoly of the new atomic weapon, a circumstance which caused some suspicion that the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hard on the heels of the vital decisions taken at Potsdam, was intended at least

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as much to impress the Soviet government as to hasten the Japanese surrender. However that may be, the expectations placed upon continued Western—or rather American—monopoly of the new weapon are now known to have been unrealistic even at a time when they seemed in accordance with the known facts. Thus if a belief that the Soviet Union was unable to produce atomic arms, or at least would take a decade over it, formed part of the mental background of Western policy-making, that misjudgment must be listed among the other notable intellectual errors of the period. In actual fact it is doubtful whether those in authority were quite so naive as they appeared to be some years later, when they allowed it to be inferred that but for Soviet espionage the secret of the bomb might have been preserved indefinitely. Like much else that came to be said and written, this suggestion belongs to the folklore of the cold war. Already in June 1945, a "Committee on Social and Political Implications," appointed by the Metallurgical Laboratory in Chicago and presided by Professor James Franck, had presented a Report to the U.S. Secretary of War which stressed the impossibility of the United States retaining the monopoly.[1] (The signatories incidentally opposed the use of the atomic bomb against an already defeated Japan, a recommendation which was promptly ignored.) When in March 1946 the U.S. State Department issued the so-called Acheson-Lilienthal Report advising on methods of atomic control, the warning was repeated, this time with all the authority of a Committee including such figures as Dr. Vannevar Bush, Professor James B. Conant, and Major General Leslie R. Groves, to say nothing of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, who was partly responsible for writing the Report. Thus there was plenty of advance notice from those best qualified that within a few years an atomic arms race would be on, unless international ownership and/or control of atomic energy could be arranged. The problem consequently—except for those who seriously believed that the Soviet government would submit to outside control of atomic installations—was how to assemble the elements of a new world-wide political system before Russia had caught up in the race. This of course could not be stated, but it was implicit in Churchill's Fulton address (March 1946) and in the actions of the Western

1 *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,* Chicago, May 1946.

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powers. Not for a moment did the existence of the United Nations make any difference to the crucial issue of reconstructing a new balance of power. At most it can be said to have confused the public about the situation, especially since Roosevelt's insistence on the inclusion of China among the Big Five had resulted in one of the five permanent seats on the Security Council being occupied by a Chinese government which was rapidly losing all authority at home. Only with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949 was there a partial return to reality, i.e., a partial admission that the real aims of Western statesmanship could not be pursued by enlisting the cumbersome machinery of the Charter. Although the reported explosion of the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb in the fall of that year was a coincidence, the conjunction of both events served to emphasize the transition from the euphoria of the immediate post-war period to the acceptance of a divided world which thereafter became a commonplace.

On the Soviet side less time was lost in making their public understand that a new arms race was on. It has always been a cardinal point of Leninist thinking that every peace is a preparation for the next war—a Clausewitzian axiom whose ultimate sanction lies in Hegel's *Logic,* along with a good deal of actual experience—and that the closeness of war can be measured by the amount and intensity of pacifist talk in currency among governments and populations. Since atomic energy had now become the crucial factor, it followed that both sides would try to maneuver, with a view to winning public support for their proposals regarding international control, and that neither would risk an open conflict until reasonably sure of having gained the upper hand in the propaganda war. To say that the Soviet government did not at any time intend to accept the American proposals for atomic control first put forward in 1946, or even to discuss them seriously, is an understatement. It never regarded them as anything but a bid for public support in the general drive to obtain control of the new sources of power, and as a maneuver intended to place America's rival in an unfavorable light. Any other assumption was excluded from the start, not merely by the habitual cynicism of the political practitioner, but by the intellectual framework within which the Soviet government has operated since its inception. It was hardly to be expected that these assumptions would

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be sacrificed to the rhetoric of American spokesmen, especially if there was ground for believing that the Soviet Union would shortly draw level in the arms race. That this has now occurred, or almost occurred, while the West is as far as ever from having restored the balance destroyed in 1945, is the largest and most disagreeable fact on the contemporary scene. It was, however, by no means unforeseeable ten years ago.

There is of course a sense in which every international system can be said to balance. Thus the present relationship between the NATO powers and the Russo-Chinese bloc is roughly one of balance, if by this is meant that neither group is significantly stronger than the other, and that each would do well to refrain from putting matters to the test. But this is not what the Western governments had in mind during those wartime conferences on which so much startling light has been cast by Sir Winston Churchill's memoirs and similar disclosures. There is indeed ample evidence that the Grand Alliance was never as solid as it looked on the surface, and that the cold war really began as soon as the Axis had obviously been defeated. But the quantum of wishful thinking that went into the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam agreements was much larger than the American and British publics had a right to expect from their leaders. No real effort was made to preserve either the independence of Poland (for which Britain and France had nominally gone to war in 1939), or the existence of a viable Germany. In the main this outcome reflected the emergence of two non-European colossi with world-wide interests quite different from those of the traditional European powers. It has proved a misfortune that Britain, even under Churchill, was unable to resist this trend, but in the long run the tendency for America and Russia to treat European interests as bargaining counters was bound to assert itself. That it did so under wartime conditions of censorship and official propaganda calculated to flatter the naïveté of the Common Man and his readiness to take a one-dimensional view of the world, doubtless facilitated the operation but did not alter its essential character.

II Utopia Revisited

The neo-liberal utopia, of which the United Nations Charter was the most exact—i.e., the emptiest—expression, had for a

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complement the belief that the time had come to restore the classic framework of international trade. It was indeed recognized that the golden age of liberalism could not be restored all at once, and that the whole operation would depend on the initiative of the United States. With these qualifications the neo-liberal school around Keynes saw no reason to despair of ultimate success. The Master had, it is true, apostatized from economic orthodoxy, and his wartime proposals for a managed international currency represented a compromise between the older liberal and the younger socialist schools of thought at Oxford and Cambridge. But similar processes had occurred in the United States, and it seemed a plausible assumption that an America committed to the basic principles of the New Deal would find sufficient common ground with Britain and Western Europe to make a workable partnership possible. It is now a commonplace that this hope—never very firmly grounded—had already come to nothing by 1946.[2] Its disappearance has recently been capped by the discovery that even the more modest expectations of the school—e.g., the belief that the United States would substantially alter its tariff policy—are unlikely to be fulfilled in the measurable future. For practical purposes this means that Britain cannot expect to trade on a much enlarged scale with the dollar area. But the long-range implications do not affect Britain alone. They point inexorably to a widening gap between North America and the rest of the Atlantic world—a gap in productivity, in living standards, in the ability to withstand temporary recessions, and ultimately in the willingness to pursue common aims. The muttered European protest over American restrictions on trade with the Eastern bloc is merely a symptom of this divorce. Underlying it is the belief that the world is in essentials drifting back to the situation which existed before the Axis threat forced America and Europe to co-operate—the main difference being that in the interval America has become far more powerful, both absolutely and in relation to its partners. This is the background of the resentful neutralism of which so much is heard in Europe today.

2 Cf. Roy Harrod, *John Maynard Keynes,* Macmillan, 1951. Mr. Harrod was himself among the optimists at the time, and for some years continued to assert that there was, for Britain, no true dollar shortage. Since the advent of a Conservative Government, which has found the shortage just as real as its predecessor, he is understood to have signified a change of mind.

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The 1919-39 period had been distinguished by a sustained effort on the part of Western statesmanship to get back to 1914. The outcome was the great depression, Hitler's rise, the Second World War, and the spread of Soviet power to Central Europe. Since 1945 we have witnessed a comparable attempt to restore at least the conditions prevalent in 1939. This tendency found an early expression in the Bretton Woods agreement, which placed the burden of restoring an international balance of payments not upon the creditor but upon the debtor nations (principally Great Britain). As a sop to them it provided an international monetary fund of $3 billion to close a dollar gap which between 1946 and 1949 alone amounted to no less than $20 billion. A further demonstration of the same state of mind was provided by the terms of the 1945-46 U.S. loan to Britain, which showed that a determined attempt was to be made to revive the economic system of the late nineteenth century—a system which depended for its functioning on the easy availability of sterling. It is true that these exercises in neo-liberal utopianism were followed by the Marshall Plan, hastily extemporized in 1947 to halt the disintegration set in train by the inevitable breakdown of Britain's attempt to make sterling freely convertible: an experiment undertaken by the British Government, without the slightest chance of success, in response to American pressure to help build "One World." But the Marshall Plan, although a brilliant success as a rescue operation, did not effect any major structural changes. The West European coal-steel merger, planned by M. Monnet and blessed by M. Schuman, remained an isolated accomplishment. Above all, no sustained effort was undertaken to integrate the West European economies and merge them with the sterling bloc, so as to establish an international economic system outside the dollar area and independent of constant dollar support. On the contrary, tendencies making in this direction were frowned upon, and it is only fairly recently that realism has gained the upper hand on both sides of the Atlantic.[3] Thus, while the Soviet government drew the logical conclusion from the collapse of the pre-1914 division of labor and the consequent

3 Cf. *The Economist*, January 30, 1954. "But if there is no excuse for a policy of two Worlds, it is equally unrealistic to cling to the belief that the One World of postwar dreams—the One World without quotas, excessive tariffs, discriminations, or exchange controls—can be attained within measurable time."

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disintegration of the single all-embracing world market, Western policy for some critical years pursued the phantom of a near-global free trade system. It has taken repeated currency crises in Western Europe, and the perpetuation of the "dollar gap," to convince the policy-makers that even the "free world" is, economically speaking, composed of two different halves which intersect but cannot be merged. As a corollary of this discovery it is now beginning to be appreciated that *planned* capital investment in the so-called backward countries is required, not as a philanthropic operation, but to establish an "international" division of labor outside the dollar area. This is a considerable step forward from the over-simple solutions popular in 1945. The road would no doubt have been traveled more rapidly if utopianism had not had so powerful a hold upon Western statesmen and "practical" men of affairs.

In looking back on the period it is not without interest to note that the United Nations Charter, the Bretton Woods agreement on removing economic barriers, and the initial proposals for controlling atomic energy, were conceived more or less simultaneously in 1944-46, to be acclaimed for a few months and then rapidly forgotten. The time was doubtless favorable to the drafting of ambitious plans, but a study of these documents discloses a family resemblance which has not received sufficient notice. There is, on the one hand, the traditional emphasis on the elimination of barriers to peace and world trade: a rational framework is to be constructed within which all nations shall be free to pursue their legitimate aims. But the introduction of such bodies as the Security Council, and the proposed, if stillborn, international atomic control commission, strikes a new note. Here the accent is on planning, intervention and a strong central authority. The old and the new liberalism—both meeting in the person of Keynes, who in some sense impressed his stamp upon the whole era—share the belief in a rational solution of the world's problems. But where the older school placed its trust in individual and national self-interest, the new hard-bitten generation of post-totalitarian liberals is distinguished by a reluctant acceptance of the need for more centralized power. This new liberalism no longer puts its entire faith in enlightened self-interest and the hidden hand: it has become "managerial." Hence the fashionable talk about "putting teeth into the Charter." Where its utopian character still shows is

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in its indifference to problems of social and political structure, e.g., in the naive assumption that all powers—including super-powers like the United States and the Soviet Union—can be trusted to subject themselves to a neutral agency actuated by a purely rational, i.e., purely technocratic, conception of its duties; or in the belief that an international regime of free trade might have drawn the Soviet Union into its orbit and thus prevented the cold war from becoming really dangerous. The lawyers, scientists, economists and publicists who in 1945-46 brought this ideology into prominence were clearly unaware of its utopian character. They appear to have thought that, given a minimum of sanity and good will on the part of the politicians, these aims were easily attainable. It is one of the weaknesses of liberalism, considered as a general philosophy, that it encourages such notions. The Keynesian-New Dealish, or neo-liberal, utopia of 1945, like its Wilsonian predecessor, did at bottom reflect a rational impulse toward world organization; but its evasion of the main political issue made it certain that the advance would be halted long before the goal had been reached.

The liberal utopia—to which the British Labour Government, for all its socialist protestations, was as firmly committed as the U.S. Administration—rested upon the expectation of a prolonged era of peace, Anglo-American hegemony (with the aid of China) in the United Nations and in the world generally, free trade outside the Soviet orbit and gradual liberalization within, a weakened and profoundly pacific Russia far behind the Western powers in the utilization of atomic energy. . . . What has become of these assumptions which were then held by all the best-informed people? We have seen the world polarized between the Atlantic community and the Eurasian bloc; China repudiating the traditional pro-American orientation of her intelligentsia and going through a Communist revolution; India vacillating and profoundly endangered by reason of her unsolved problems; the Western powers divided among themselves, with America and Europe drawing apart after a brief period of close co-operation; neutralism in Europe and nationalism in the United States growing apace, and large sections of the European working class in a state of what amounts to secession from the body politic; lastly the Soviet Union, under rigid totalitarian leadership, developing her heavy industry, if not the whole of her economy, at a faster

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pace than most other countries and gradually exceeding the combined output of Western Europe. In the light of these developments one can scarcely go on maintaining that the institutions set up in 1945 are adequate, or that they can be shored up by the establishment of a series of regional defense systems resting on nothing better than a combination of outdated nationalism and airborne imperialism.

One can indeed argue that even in 1945 these dangers were foreseen and that a conscious attempt was made to guard against them. Was not one of the prime purposes of the United Nations Charter the integration of the Soviet Union into the framework of an international society, precisely because it was felt that failure in this respect would split the world in two? And did not the U.S. government's atomic control proposals in 1946 spring from a similar perception? One can only say that in both instances the scheme assumed a balance of power which did not in fact exist, or which ceased to exist after China had passed through revolution, and after Russia had recovered from the war and developed her own atomic weapons. It is no criticism of the planners to say that even their most idealistic schemes presupposed effective American control of the new world organization, including the projected international atomic control commission. It is a simple tribute to their common sense to note that even at the height of enthusiasm they did not altogether overlook the fact that someone would have to make the new global machinery work. That someone, needless to say, was to be the United States, just as in the nineteenth century it had been Britain. There is no discredit in admitting this; indeed, it would have been better if it had been stated more plainly, instead of being concealed behind a great deal of rather spurious rhetoric about the new world society. What was wrong with the system was not that it contained a built-in device for keeping it in touch with politico-military reality, but that the calculation left out too many imponderables. These included the totalitarian character of Soviet society, the Stalinist drive to make capital investment in heavy industry prevail over all other considerations, Russian mastery of the atom bomb, the strength of Chinese Communism and its attraction for other Asian revolutionary movements, and the inadequacy of neo-liberal solutions in Europe, especially in countries like Italy, but also to some extent in France. Last but not least, the planners trusted too

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much to the continuance of liberal-labor influence in the United States—the only influence which in this age can keep America in touch with the radical mass movements of Europe and Asia.

The relationship between the new world society and the emerging Pax Americana is neither simple nor free from contradictions. It requires some mutual adaptation, for the United States will in the foreseeable future not merely be more powerful but socially more conservative than the majority of her allies. The alliance demands from Americans tolerance for the world-wide growth of socialist tendencies, and from socialists in Europe and Asia a better understanding of the fact that America need not be a hindrance to progress, even though she is still wedded to capitalism. It requires the creation of common organs, such as an Atlantic Council and possibly a Pacific Council, to include like-minded nations—a function which the United Nations should never have been expected to fulfill, and which the institution at Lake Success will become increasingly less capable of fulfilling as it becomes more truly universal. It demands common planning in the economic sphere, even at the cost of some distress to the fanatics of laisser-faire. It necessitates, in short, a genuine alliance between, or synthesis of, liberalism and socialism, freedom and planning, American and European-Asian thinking. There was a brief period after the war when this aim seemed to have been accepted on both sides of the Atlantic and in parts of Asia, but the opportunity was allowed to slip, and we are now witnessing the consequences of this retrogression. No doubt Western Europe bears as much or more responsibility for this partial debacle as America. What matters now is that both should recognize their common interest and the need for another joint advance.

III Problems of Co-existence

To discuss the question of so-called "peaceful co-existence" in a world radically divided into two incompatible halves evidently requires something rather different from the kind of political analysis appropriate down to 1914, and in some degree even down to 1939. Instead of the familiar "concert of powers," all pursuing limited aims, there are now two great political-military centers, around which the remainder of the world tends to organize itself. And while in the

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nineteenth century affiliation to rival groups of powers did not, in the majority of cases, involve basic issues of political loyalty, today every such move is fraught with consequences of the most far-reaching kind. In this sense it is true to say that we are living in an age of world revolution. Not only is the disturbance global in scope, but the nature of the upheaval renders genuine neutrality impossible. The totalitarian reorganization of society unsuccessfully attempted by Germany in 1933-45, and currently undertaken on a vastly greater scale by the Communist powers, is so radical as to turn every political issue into a life-or-death matter. It is not surprising that, in the face of such a challenge, talk of peaceful co-existence should sound hollow. Yet the technical developments which have accompanied, and to some extent caused, this situation are themselves so startling and unprecedented that all traditional notions of legitimate self-defense will have to be devised. If it is unrealistic to suppose that East and West can at present dwell peacefully side by side, it is dangerous, to say the least, to fashion policy on the tacit assumption that all-out war is a suitable way of resolving the issue. For it takes no great effort of the imagination to realize that, were such a catastrophe to occur, it would make an end of civilization as we have hitherto known it, and in the face of such a virtual certainty even the issue of global hegemony for one or the other side begins to look a trifle old-fashioned.

Moreover, it is by no means certain, or even likely, that the issue can in fact be settled, even at the cost of destroying the world's centers of civilization. On the contrary, there is good ground for thinking that there exist no military means of breaking the fundamental deadlock, and that even a war waged with the latest weapons would merely result in a somewhat different kind of stalemate. The "cold war" remains cold precisely because neither side believes that the results to be expected from "hot" war would warrant the risks. It does not follow that this state of affairs will last. Quite likely the deadlock will at some point be broken. What should be clearly envisaged even now is the kind of world likely to emerge from an atomic "test of strength." In all probability it would be a world not differing fundamentally from that in which we are now living—except that it would be a great deal poorer and more savage. The thought of an atomic conflict which may flatten most of the world's

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centers of population cannot unfortunately be dismissed as too improbable or too terrible to be seriously considered; what can and should be said is that even such a global disaster would be unlikely to make much difference to the basic cleavage running through the present international society. There is something grotesque about the notion that either the Western world or the Russo-Chinese bloc can be conclusively defeated and disarmed, let alone occupied or "liberated." But even if such a consummation were possible, neither the Communist movement nor the forces upholding the Western way of life would disappear. Least of all would the problem of organizing the world society have been solved. At bottom each side still believes that there can and should be one center instead of two, though neither is at present willing to take the risk of putting the issue to the ultimate test. What the real development of the cold war suggests is, on the contrary, that the world is irremediably split into two political halves and that this cleavage will continue in the foreseeable future. It does not follow that a third world war is therefore improbable; what does seem to follow is that it would be meaningless.

This conclusion is today being challenged by a powerful school of thought which to all intents and purposes favors an all-out atomic war (whether "preventive" or camouflaged to look like defense against "Communist aggression") as the solution to all the world's ills. And doubtless there are similar tendencies on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It is against this background that one has to judge the current wave of "neutralism" in both Europe and Asia: a movement more powerful under the surface than above it. Those who hope and believe that their own particular nation or community can stand aside from the military conflict whose imminence they fear, would admit that this attitude really amounts to acceptance of the worst as being likely to happen. Neutralism in fact, insofar as it is more than a simple desire to escape destruction, discloses a belief that there is no *via media* between peace and global catastrophe. It is a way of indicating that the world must either be wholly at peace or wholly at war. But is this true? Is it not rather probable that we are moving into a twilight zone of "neither peace nor war," in which the "cold war" and "co-existence" will increasingly appear to be merely two sides of the same medal?

Let us assume that either the Korean or the Indo-Chinese con-

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flict had given rise to the employment of what are known as "tactical atomic weapons." By what logic is it supposed that their use would "automatically" have led, through various undefined intermediate stages, to a total world conflagration? That, in other words, the major powers would have become involved in the kind of war which, by general consent, can only end (or rather, begin) with the destruction of the great urban centers of America, Russia, and Europe? It may indeed be "logical," but it is not in the least likely, that this would have happened. The mere availability of "absolute" weapons and other means of "total" destruction is no guarantee that they will be used—unless each side is secretly convinced that their use is planned by the other. On any realistic calculation of the probable effects of such a conflict, it is far more likely that "total" destruction would have been confined to the smallest possible area—just as, in the past, wars were fought on the tacit understanding that ordinary life was not to be disrupted. The lapse from these civilized standards, during the confused period of the first and second world wars, is no proof that the process must be carried to its final conclusion. It merely suggests that society has not yet adapted itself to the new technological level; in other words, that the game requires a new set of rules.

What these rules are likely to be emerges much more clearly from the actual course of events since 1945 than from the voluminous discussion about universal disarmament and/or international control of atomic weapons—a discussion whose futility should by now have become evident. Everything that has happened since the last world war suggests that the typical present-day conflict is one in which the belligerents stop short of going to the final extreme suggested by military logic in its purest, i.e., most abstract form. Precisely because it has now become possible to destroy civilization itself, the actual conduct of war tends to become once again a matter over which statesmanship exerts some control. The belligerents are groping toward new forms of limited warfare; and since it is impossible, or at any rate impracticable, to limit armaments in type or in quantity, the need to limit the scope of destruction territorially asserts itself instead. If "total" war cannot be altogether prevented, statesmanship can at least make sure that it is confined to areas where no fundamental issues are involved. Thus the balance of power in Asia has

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been stabilized, for some time to come, on the battlefields of Korea; while the corresponding issue in Europe was settled, not by atomic bombardments, but by the bloodless blockade of Berlin and the equally bloodless Berlin airlift. It depends entirely upon the political direction on both sides, and not in the least on military logic, whether this kind of struggle shall go on, or whether we are due for a complete and universal breakdown. For short of a direct Soviet military advance into Western Europe, or an "atomic Pearl Harbor" upon the cities of Europe and America, nothing will cause the democratically elected governments of the Western world to send out air fleets laden with hydrogen bombs; and since both sides must be aware that this *will* occur on one of the above suppositions, it would seem that the urge for universal suicide would have to become very powerful before either side made a move calculated to bring about such results. This is not to say that it will not happen; it well may. But if it does, it will not testify to military logic, but to political fanaticism and the absence of rationality.

And conversely, there is nothing to prevent an age of "peaceful co-existence" from being also an era of cold war, and even of "real" wars, *provided they are localized*. It is a mistake to talk of co-existence as though it precluded wars such as those which have taken place in Korea and Indo-China. On the contrary, the will to make co-existence possible manifests itself precisely in the occurrence and the conduct of such wars. They are the equivalent, in modern terms, of the nineteenth-century struggle between the British Empire and Russia along the Indian and Afghan border—a struggle which flared into large-scale war in 1854, and very nearly did so again in 1876. What is implied by the term co-existence is solely the desire to spare the world the catastrophe of all-out atomic war, and more positively, the belief that in the last resort the world can and will stay divided for a very long time to come. To say that co-existence is possible and necessary is to say that the Communist powers will fail to conquer or overthrow the West, and that the West cannot hope to undo the Chinese revolution or to overthrow the present regime in Russia. And the "cold war" for the allegiance of the intermediate areas—principally, though not entirely, the so-called backward or "undeveloped" countries—is the corollary of this state of affairs, for while both sides will naturally try to win over as many doubtful countries

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as possible, neither is compelled to use military means to this end. War, revolution, propaganda, and ordinary diplomacy are intermingled in the conflict, but its purpose is the imposition of a particular form of organization, not the annexation of territory or inhabitants. There is no inherent reason why, after a period of flux and reflux, the two "worlds" should not tacitly agree to abide by the eventual outcome, whatever it may be. That they will enter into formal treaties to this effect is just as unlikely as that they will consent to a mutually satisfactory limitation and control of atomic armaments. It is sufficient that they should recognize the limits of their power.

What stands in the way of such an arrangement at present is the clash of mutually exclusive doctrines concerning the nature of the process in which we are all caught up. Just as there is a school of thought in the West which regards Communism as a temporary aberration from a supposedly fixed norm of development, so the Communists believe (even if they do not preach) that Western society is in decline, being irrevocably tied to a decaying economic system. On these suppositions, genuine co-existence is only practicable for brief, limited periods. If the non-Communist world is identified with "capitalism," or "bourgeois society," it becomes possible to project the image of an irrepressible conflict; and it does not greatly matter whether such predictions are confirmed by foolish talk in the West. If the Communist regimes in Russia and Asia are kept in power solely by terrorism, and not because Communism has exploited and travestied *one* particular solution of the modern problem of industrializing backward countries, it becomes equally possible to preach the inevitability of a head-on clash. Paradoxically, both sides are at present restrained above all by their common fear of the very technical means they are trying so hard to develop. But for the universal dread of the consequences, it is not improbable that they would already have put their respective notions to the test. But while this mutual constraint lasts, there is at any rate a chance for different views to make themselves felt, and perhaps for Western statesmanship to rise above the level of parochial and melodramatic myth-creation. For the heavier responsibility lies with the West. The nature of the Communist system in its present form inhibits the process of critical rethinking which would enable the totalitarians to get out of their

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mental straitjacket. It is all the more important that Western statesmanship should recognize and proclaim the impossibility of either incorporating the Communist powers in our kind of world, or destroying them by force. However they may dislike the prospect, the Atlantic world and the Eurasian bloc are fated to live together, or at any rate alongside each other. When this realization has sunk in, our opponents may be compelled to revise their concepts, and having taken the first step on the road to sanity it is not inconceivable that they will in time shed enough of their mental apparatus to make co-existence genuinely workable. Yet to say this is merely to express a hope, not to risk a prediction. Much may be credited to the subterranean urge for self-preservation which cannot fail to be operative on both sides; but it is useless to deny that there are forces at work which may yet carry the major powers, and with them the world at large, "through caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea."

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POEMS

EVERYBODY'S OMNIBUS REVIEW & PARIS LETTER

I propose to put forward the notion that
were it not for those sprinkled & protrusive
commas vintaged & appointed by
that pair of exiled & classy voices
the task of following one's congeners' lusher
diffidences would less closely approximate
balancing a bowl of greens across
a lawn mined with croquet arches (the very
figure of our more general condition!)
so that, excusably, perhaps, we may
neglect to send up a bit of the green to
the parcel of birdlings currently weathering
fine if less than fabulous notice.

Meanwhile in France (a real country with imaginary
gangsters) it occurs similarly to Matthew Namedropper
(guard of our bridges at the breathless hub!)
that the place is being held together with
a piece of pink string by eight bad Rumanians.
So mark down a new *frisson* for our Matthew
back at the old stand after a lecture stint in
Salzburg, where he was mistaken for Robert Taylor
Duke Ellington and a junketeering gumshoe
(who he? who he? cry the great audiences).
Nevertheless! if someone from Vienna or Prague
suddenly starts speaking the unspeakable, or
a bloody axiologist stomps out of the Black Forest
there it is monsieur practically the real article
one glass and man you're free
if only to name your own poison.

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Culture hears not her doorbell, Matthew
but pay us a visit sometime in the U S of A
land of the lightning okay
the bonecrusher handshake and the definite maybe.
By the waters of Ford and Fulbright
the chief barbaric eagles are silent under the lawn.
There's nobody here but us critics.

Gordon Sylander

MISSISSIPPI

When we went down the river on a raft
So smooth it was and easy it would seem
Land moved but never we. Storms faded aft
In Gothic castles. Trees ran in the dream
That water had, stars danced, with this log craft
America suspended on a gleam.

The days were mostly pipes and fishing lines,
Though for a turn or two we had a king,
A Nonesuch with his royal monkeyshines,
But treacherous, for all his capering.
The naked wickedness of his designs
Brought on Democracy, a steady thing.

Steady but alarming. Rip-tooth snags
Are wrapped in smoothness like the tiger's hide,
And when she blows, chickens and carpet bags
Go roiling seaward in the yellow tide.
And men are tilted still like battle flags
In Brady photographs, just as they died.

The river is too strong for bank or bar,
The landmarks change, and nothing would remain
But for the man who travels by a star,

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Whose careful eye adjusts the course again . . .
Still shadow at the wheel, his rich cigar
Glowed like a point of rectitude—Mark Twain.

If ever there were Mississippi nights,
If ever there was Dixie, as they sing,
Cry, you may cry, for all your true delights
Lost with the banjo and the Chicken Wing
Where old St. Joe slid on the water lights
And on into the dark, diminishing.

Louis Simpson

LEARNING A DEAD LANGUAGE

There is nothing for you to say. You must
Learn first to listen. Because it is dead
It will not come to you of itself, nor would you
Of yourself master it. You must therefore
Learn to be still when it is imparted,
And, though you may not yet understand, to remember.

What you remember is saved. To understand
The least thing fully you would have to perceive
The whole grammar in all its accidence
And all its system, in the perfect singleness
Of intention it has because it is dead.
You can learn only a part at a time.

What you are given to remember
Has been saved before you from death's dullness by
Remembering. The unique intention
Of a language whose speech has died is order,
Incomplete only where someone has forgotten.
You will find that that order helps you to remember.

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What you come to remember becomes yourself.
Learning will be to cultivate the awareness
Of that governing order, now pure of the passions
It composed; till, seeking it in itself,
You may find at last the passion that composed it,
Hear it both in its speech and in yourself.

What you remember saves you. To remember
Is not to rehearse, but to hear what never
Has fallen silent. So your learning is,
From the dead, order, and what sense of yourself
Is memorable, what passion may be heard
When there is nothing for you to say.

W. S. Merwin

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FILM CHRONICLE

NIGHT PEOPLE

Ads for men's suits show the model standing against a suspended mobile. But the man who buys knows that the mobile doesn't come with the suit: it's there to make him feel that the old business suit is different now. The anti-Sovietism of *Night People* serves a similar function. But the filmgoer who saw the anti-Nazi films of ten years ago will have no trouble recognizing the characters in *Night People,* just as ten years ago he could have detected (under the Nazi black shirts) psychopathic killers, trigger-happy cattle rustlers, and the screen villain of earliest vintage—the man who will foreclose the mortgage if he doesn't get the girl. The Soviet creatures of the night are direct descendants of the early film archetype, the bad man. Those who make films like *Night People* may or may not be privately concerned with the film's political message (the suit manufacturer may or may not be concerned with the future of wire sculpture); in the film politics is period décor—used to give melodrama the up-to-date look that will sell.

Night People is set in Berlin: a U.S. soldier is kidnaped; he is rescued by a U.S. Intelligence Officer (Gregory Peck) who knows how to deal with the Russians. They are "head-hunting cannibals" and must be treated as such. The film is given a superficial credibility by documentary-style shots of American soldiers, by glimpses of Berlin, and by the audience's knowledge that Americans in Europe have in fact been kidnaped. One might even conceive that someone who understood the nature of Communism might view certain Communists as "cannibals." But it would be a mistake to confuse the political attitudes presented in *Night People* with anything derived from historical understanding. Nunnally Johnson, who wrote, directed, and produced the film, has referred to it as "Dick Tracy in Berlin." His earlier anti-Nazi production *The Moon is Down* could be described as "Dick Tracy in Norway," and many of his films could be adequately designated as just plain "Dick Tracy."

Actual kidnapings have posed intricate political and moral problems. Should the victim be ransomed by economic concessions, should a

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nation submit to extortion? Were some of the victims observers for the U.S. and where does observation stop and espionage begin? We know that our government must have espionage agents in Europe—can we believe in the innocence of every victim? If they were guilty of some charges but not guilty of all the charges, what kind of protest is morally possible? The drama in the case of a Robert Vogeler or a William Oatis is in the fathoming of moral and political ambiguities. While purportedly about an East-West kidnaping, *Night People* presents a crime and a rescue. The hero has righted the wrong before we have even had a chance to explore our recollections of what may be involved in political kidnapings. Soviet ambitions and intrigue become a simple convenience to the film maker: the label "Communism" is the guarantee that the hero is up against a solid evil threat. For the sake of the melodrama, the Communism cannot be more than a label.

Night People is not much worse or much better than a lot of other movies—they're made cynically enough and they may, for all we know, be accepted cynically. David Riesman has pointed out that nobody believes advertising, neither those who write it nor those who absorb it. And the same can be said for most of our movies. Somebody turns the stuff out to make a living; it would seem naive to hold him responsible for it. In a state of suspended belief a writer can put the conflict of East and West into the capable hands of Dick Tracy: the film wasn't really written, it was *turned out.* And the audiences that buy standardized commodities may be too sophisticated about mass production to believe films and advertising, but they are willing to absorb products and claims—with suspended belief. Audiences don't believe, but they don't *not* believe either. And when you accept something without believing it, you accept it on *faith.* You buy the product by name. Who would *believe* in *Rose-Marie*? Yet the audience, after taking it in, emerges singing the Indian Love Call and it becomes a substantial part of American sentimental tone. Who would believe that *Night People* presents a political analysis? Yet the political attitudes that don't originate in political analysis become part of national political tone. Acceptance is not *belief,* but acceptance may imply the willingness to let it go at that and to prefer the accessible politics (to which one can feel as cynical and "knowing" as toward an ad) to political thought that requires effort, attention, and involvement.

The bit players who once had steady employment as S.S. guards are right at home in their new Soviet milieu; the familiar psychopathic faces provide a kind of reassurance that the new world situation is not so different from the old one (we beat these bullies once already). Perhaps *Night People* can even seem realistic because it *is* so familiar. The

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make-believe that is acted out often enough attains a special status: it becomes a real part of our experience. (Films like *Quo Vadis, The Prisoner of Zenda, Showboat, The Merry Widow* have been made so many times that to the mass audience they have the status of classics; are they not immortal if three generations have seen them?) Advertising, using the same appeals—the familiar with the "new" look, also depends upon repetition to make its point. If we *believed* an advertising claim, hearing it once would be enough. It is because we do not believe that advertising uses repetition and variation into infinity to get its claims accepted.

The suggestion that politics as used in melodrama is advertising décor is not intended metaphorically. I wish to suggest that films (and other forms of commercial entertainment) are becoming inseparable from advertising, and that advertising sets the stage for our national morality play.

Advertising has been borrowing from literature, art, and the theater; films meanwhile are taking over not merely the look of advertising art—clear, blatant poster design—but the very content of advertising. Put together an advertising photograph and a movie still from *How to Marry a Millionaire* (another Nunnally Johnson production) and they merge into each other: they belong to the same genre. The new young Hollywood heroine is not too readily distinguishable from the model in the Van Raalte ad; if the ad is a few years old, chances are this *is* the same girl. In a few months she will be on the front of movie magazines and on the back of news magazines endorsing her favorite cigarette. She is both a commodity for sale and a salesman for other commodities (and her value as one depends upon her value as the other). In any traditional sense, Gregory Peck is not an actor at all; he is a model, and the model has become the American ideal. Advertising dramatizes a way of life with certain consumption patterns, social attitudes and goals, the same way of life dramatized in films; films are becoming advertising in motion.

Is *Executive Suite*[1] in substance any different from an institutional ad—"This Company Believes in the Future of America"? Break it down

1 In contrast with the situation in the film, some of the actual problems of furniture manufacturers might provide material for farce: how to make furniture that will collapse after a carefully calculated interval (refrigerator manufacturers are studying the problem of "replacement"—i.e., designing refrigerators that will necessitate replacement in 10 years rather than 15 or 20 years) or that will be outmoded by a new style (automobile manufacturers are wrestling with consumers' lag—people just don't yet understand that the 1950 car is to be discarded with the 1950 hat). The designer-hero of *Executive Suite* can be a real menace to American business: good designs last too long.

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into shots—the hero's home, the manufacturing process scene, the mother playing catch with her son, and you are looking at pages in *Sunset, Life,* and *Today's Woman.* Then open *Time,* and there are the actors from the film speaking into dictaphones to illustrate the message: "Cameron Hawley, author of *Executive Suite,* says 'I use my Dictaphone TIME-MASTER constantly and with great success.'" If we are no longer sure what medium we are in, the reason is that there are no longer any organic differences.

The common aim of attracting and pleasing the public has synthesized their methods and their content. The film and the ad tell their story so that the customer can take it all in at a glance. They show him to himself as he wants to be, and if flattery is not enough, science and progress may clinch the sale. The new toothpaste has an activating agent; new shirts and shorts have polyester fibers running through them; *Night People* is filmed in CinemaScope with Stereophonic Sound. Can we balk at technical advances that "2,000 years of experiment and research have brought to us"? New "technical advances" increase not only the physical accessibility of cultural goods, the content of the goods becomes increasingly accessible. The film's material has been assembled, the plot adapted; sound engineers have amplified the hero's voice, and the heroine's figure has been surgically reconstructed (actresses who scorn falsies can now have plastic breasts built-in). The new wide screen surrounds us and sounds converge upon us. Just one thing is lost: the essence of film "magic" which lay in our imaginative absorption, our entering into the film (as we might enter into the world of a Dostoevsky novel or *Middlemarch*). Now the film can come to us—one more consummation of the efforts to diminish the labor (and the joy) of imaginative participation.

All this has been done for us; all that's left for us is to buy. Suppose an audience does buy a film—what do they do with it? The audience is not exactly passive, it has its likes and its dislikes and it expresses them—in terms drawn more from advertising, however, than from art. The audience talks freely about the actor's personality, the actress's appeal, the likeableness of their actions. Film critics become experts in "craftsmanship" and mechanics; Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* is considered impossibly slow and dim, while *Night People* is found to be "racy," "well-made," and "fast-paced"—praise more suitable to the art of a Studebaker than to the art of the film. A patron who wanted to mull a film over for a while would be judged archaic—and rightly so. There is nothing to mull over: a trained crew did all that in advance.

Melodrama, perhaps the most highly developed type of American

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film, is the chief vehicle for political thought in our films (*Casablanca, Edge of Darkness, To Have and Have Not, North Star,* etc.). Melodrama, like the morality play, is a popular form; structurally melodrama is the morality play with the sermons omitted and the pattern of oppositions issuing in sensational action. Its intention is primarily to entertain (by excitation) rather than to instruct (entertainingly). Labels stand for the sermons that are dispensed with, and the action is central.

In some of the war and postwar films the writers and directors seemed to feel they were triumphing over Hollywood and over melodrama itself by putting the form to worthwhile social ends: they put sermons back in. The democratic messages delayed and impeded the action, of course, but they helped to save the faces of those engaged in the work. (Perhaps without the pseudo-justification provided by speeches about democracy, the artists would have been shattered by the recognition that films like *Cornered* aroused and appealed to an appetite for violence.) While the hypocrisy of the method made the films insulting and the democratic moralizing became offensive dogma, the effort did indicate the moral and political disturbances, and the sense of responsibility, of the film makers. *Night People* reduces the political thought to what it was anyway—labeling—and nothing impedes the action. The film is almost "pure" melodrama. The author doesn't try to convince himself or the public that he's performing an educational service or that the film should be taken seriously. The cynicism is easier to take than hypocrisy, but it also shows just how far we are going.

Heroism is the substance of melodrama, as of standard Westerns and adventure films, but there is little effort in Hollywood to make it convincing or even to relate it to the hero's character (in *Night People* a few additional labels—the hero went to a Catholic college, he was a professional football player, etc.—suffice). We have come a long way since the days when Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. winked at the audience as he performed his feats; now the audience winks at the screen.[2]

The political facts of life may shatter the stereotypes of Hollywood melodrama but economic facts support them. The formula hero-defeats-villains has been tested at the box-office since the beginning of film history and it may last until the end. Melodrama is simple and rigid and yet flexible enough to accommodate itself to historical changes.

2 *The New Yorker* carries sophisticated consumption to extremes: it is "knowing" about everything. The reader is supposed to "see through" what he buys—whether it's a production of *Macbeth,* a lace peignoir, a biography of Freud, or a $10 haircut (executed by Vergnes himself). One must admit that the consumer who doesn't take anything too seriously is aesthetically preferable to the unsportsmanlike consumer who takes buying so seriously that he pores over *Consumer Reports.*

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The hero is always the defender of the right and he is *our* representative. He rarely changes labels; on the few occasions when he is not an American he demonstrates that those on our side are just like us. (Gregory Peck's first screen role was in *Days of Glory*: as an heroic Soviet soldier he fought the evil Nazis.)

The villains are marked by one constant: they are subhuman. If the hero of *Night People* did not know that the enemy are cannibals, he might feel some qualms about the free dispensation of strychnine (he must feel as sure as Hitler that those opposing him are beyond reconciliation). Film melodrama, like political ideology with which it has much in common, has a convenient way of disposing of the humanity of enemies: *we* stand for humanity; *they* stand for something else. The robbers who are shot, the Nazis who are knifed—they are cowards or fanatics and they don't deserve to live. Fear, on the one hand, and, on the other, devotion to a "misguided" cause to the disregard of personal safety are evidence of subhumanity. The villains are usually more expressive than the heroes because their inhumanity is demonstrated precisely by the display of extreme human emotions. (Gregory Peck, who is always a hero, is rarely called upon to register any emotion whatever. The devil can be expressive, but the hero is a stick of wood.) The villains are not human; if they were, they'd be on our side. When historical circumstances change and our former enemies become allies, we let bygones be bygones and they are restored to human estate. Thus the little yellow bastards are now cultured Japanese; the blood-guilty Germans are now hard-working people, so akin to Americans in their moral standards and ability to organize an efficient economy; now it is the Russians, the courageous pioneers and fighting men of the war years, who are treacherous and subhuman. (In *Night People* the enemy are variously described as "the creeps over there," "burglars," "a methodical bunch of lice.") Political melodrama looks ahead.

This is the level of the anti-Communism of *Night People*. And it is at this level that the advertising-entertainment medium has political effect. In a culture which has been movie-centered for thirty years, films are a reflection of popular American thought as well as an influence upon it. At the Army-McCarthy hearings, the participants, conscious of the radio and television audience, find it necessary to proclaim, each in his turn, that he *hates* Communists. McCarthy imputes weakness and political unreliability to the Secretary of the Army by suggesting that Stevens merely *dislikes* Communists. In other words, if he knew what they were, he would *hate* them; he lacks the hero's sureness. McCarthy draws political support by the crude, yet surprisingly controlled, intensity of his hatred of Communists; the intensity suggests that he,

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like Intelligence Officer Peck, knows how to take care of rats, and his lack of scruples becomes a political asset. Further knowledge is irrelevant; the hero does not need to look too closely into the heart of evil.

Knowledge may even be dangerous. The hero should know that Communists are rats without needing to examine the nature of Communism. Is our thinking so primitive that we fear that a close look will not only expose us to destruction but will turn us into rats, that Communism is contagious? Is that why there is so much fear that people may read Communist literature, and why those who have had no contact with Communism are deemed the only safe anti-Communists? The man of conscience who examines the enemy sees human beings—the primitive explanation is that he got too close and was infected. If you know enough to hate Communists, you know enough; if you know more, perhaps you can no longer hate. The ritualistic nature of this popular anti-Communism was made apparent in the public reaction to Acheson's remark that he wouldn't turn his back on Alger Hiss. Acheson spoke as one human being talking about another; he was attacked for his failure to recognize that Soviet agents are not supposed to be regarded as human beings.

The morality play had meaning as an instructive dramatization, an externalization of the conflict within man. Our popular culture and popular politics and even our popular religion take this conflict and project it onto the outside world. The resulting simplification has immediate advantages: we are exonerated, they are guilty. In contrast with drama which sensitizes man to human complexity, melodrama desensitizes men. No wonder the public has no patience with real political issues, nor with the moral complexities of Shakespeare or Greek tragedy. The movies know how to do it better: in a film, Stevens or McCarthy would prove his case; in a film, Oppenheimer would be innocent or guilty. A reporter who made a telephone survey asking "Are you listening to the Army-McCarthy hearings?" got the housewife's response: "No, that's not my idea of entertainment." It is the stereotyped heroes and villains of her brand of entertainment who react upon our public figures—so that if Stevens admitted that he had functioned in the real world of conciliation and compromise, he would be publicly dishonored (yet he cannot prove his basic honesty without making that admission).

Senator McCarthy has not the look of a man in the grip of a fixed idea; rather he has the look of a man who has the fixed idea well in hand. When national issues can be discussed in terms of "ferreting out rats" (and even McCarthy's political opponents accept the term) the man with the fixed idea is the man who appears to stand for something.

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He has found the role to play. When Senator McCarthy identifies himself with *right* and identifies anyone who opposes him with the Communist conspiracy, he carries the political morality play to its paranoid conclusion—a reductio ad absurdum in which right and wrong, and political good and evil, dissolve into: are you for me or against me? But the question may be asked, are not this morality and this politics fundamentally just as absurd and just as dangerous when practiced on a national scale in our commercial culture? The world is *not* divided into good and evil, enemies are *not* all alike, Communists are *not* just Nazis with a different accent; and it is precisely the task of political analysis (and the incidental function of literature and drama) to help us understand the nature of our enemies and the nature of our opposition to them. A country which accepts wars as contests between good and evil is suffering from the delusion that the morality play symbolizes real political conflicts.

Some political theorists would like to manipulate this delusion: they hold that the only way to combat Communism is to employ the "useful myth" that the current world struggle is a battle between Christianity and atheism, that the free world represents God on earth and the Communist countries, the anti-Christ. Such a "useful myth" may very likely, however, be purchased (for the most part) just as cynically as it is sold. Is a myth a myth for the public that accepts it without conviction? Or does "Fight for God" become more like the advertising slogan "Always Buy Chesterfields"—a slogan which does not prevent the Chesterfield smoker from having nagging fears of lung cancer and heart disease? The modern man who fights in a mythical holy crusade knows he's compelled to fight—whether it's for God or not.

Cecil B. DeMille, who might lay claim to having falsified history as much as any man alive, is now at work on *The Ten Commandments* (in Vista Vision). He states: "It's amazing how much our story parallels the world situation today"—the parallel may be a bit elusive, but no doubt DeMille will make his point. Other film makers, suddenly confronted with CinemaScope, have been raiding his domain; they appear to be so dazzled by the width of the screen they feel it can only be filled by God. Their primitive awe is similar to that of the public which is attracted to "big" pictures. Though it is easy to scoff at the advertising which emphasizes the *size* of a picture—the cast of thousands, the number of millions spent—magnitude in itself represents an achievement to the public. The whole family goes to *The Robe* or *The Greatest Show on Earth*—it's an event like *Gone with the Wind* or *Duel in the Sun,* as big as a natural catastrophe. Primitivism takes many forms. We

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no longer hear arguments on all sides about what causes wars: global atomic warfare is so big it seems to be something only God can explain. (*Night People* is not a small picture: the closing shot leaves the hero confronting the heavens.)

The danger in manipulation and cynicism is not that those who extol the greatness of the democratic idea and the greatness of the common man while treating the public as common fools are Machiavellians scheming to impose an ideology upon the public. The democratic ideology has been imposed on *them*: they are driven by economic necessity (and political necessity) to give the public what it wants. The real danger is that we may lose the capacity for those extensions in height, in depth, in space which are the experience of art and thought. If the public becomes accustomed to being pleased and pandered to, the content is drained out of democratic political life. (The pimp who peddles good clean stuff is nevertheless engaged in prostitution.)

After dozens of anti-Nazi films and countless slick stories and articles, the public had had enough of Hitler. What they wearied of had only the slenderest connection with the subject of Nazism; they got tired of the old formula with the Nazi label. But they didn't reject the formula, they settled for a change of labels. In the same way Hollywood may well exhaust anti-Communism before it has gotten near it. *Night People* is just the beginning of a new cycle—a cycle which begins by exploiting public curiosity and ends by satiating it.

All our advertising is propaganda, of course, but it has become so much a part of our life, it is so pervasive, that we just don't know what it is propaganda *for*. Somehow it keeps the wheels rolling and that seems to be what it's for. In Hollywood productions, the American soldiers and civilians abroad are soft touches, chivalrous under the wisecracks, patronizing and generous toward unfortunate little people the world over, especially toward the littlest, children; aroused by injustice the American is Robin Hood free by birth from the threat of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Though this propaganda fails us abroad (too many Americans having been there) it functions at home as an entertaining form of self-congratulation and self-glorification: we consume our own propaganda. Advertising's fixation on images of success, glamour, and plenty informs American films—and American life—with an unreal quality: our prosperity looks as empty as an ad. Why don't other peoples see that we are the heroes and the Russians cannibals? One reason is that America's public relations romance with itself is a spectacle to the rest of the world.

Pauline Kael

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BOOKS

THE NEW MINERVA, OR LOST GROUND REGAINED

THE EMPEROR'S CLOTHES. By Kathleen Nott. Indiana University Press. $4.00.

This book is a critique of the theological "orthodoxy" of T. S. Eliot and of lesser writers such as T. E. Hulme, Basil Willey, C. S. Lewis, Dorothy Sayers, and Graham Greene; it is also an inquiry into the general relation of poetry, religion, and science. Miss Nott is an English novelist and poet, and one gathers that her book has made a stir in England. It probably won't make a stir here, the temper of the times being what it is. There appears to be little taste in this country for polemical writing, at least of the radical, empirical sort.

One may even fear that the words of Philip Toynbee which the publisher is using to advertise the book will scare off more readers than they will attract; for Mr. Toynbee says (accurately) that this is "a witty, hard hitting, and deeply serious book, a rare example in our time of vigorous polemic." The blurb about a different book on the back of the dust jacket of *The Emperor's Clothes* will probably appeal to most readers more strongly than Mr. Toynbee's words because, in speaking of Philip Wheelwright's *The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism,* it implies that Mr. Wheelwright (whether truly or not I don't know—I do know that Mr. W. is a fine scholar) lumps together in common cause religion and poetry, and wants to save them from the onslaughts of the scientific mind. We live in a period when books that make us think of burning fountains and the language of symbolism apparently cause that surge of excitement which used to be aroused by subtitles such as Miss Nott's: *An Attack on the Dogmatic Orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot,* et al. Had she wished to entice the major segment of the literary mind Miss Nott might have done better to call her book something like *The Trembling Tripod, The Bleeding Lance,* or possibly *Buckets of Blood: A Study in Literary Iconography.* But as she herself observes in another connection, "there is no bad time like the present." And I must say that, reading her brilliant book, I began to think that the future might brighten and that one's lost hopes of a liberal and polemical criticism might be revived.

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Part of our trouble certainly has been that we have had no one in this country who could have written *The Emperor's Clothes,* combining, as it does, philosophical competence with literary sensibility. Philosophers of Miss Nott's general persuasion become embroiled either in the interpretation of world politics or in purely academic concerns and consequently lose sight of literature. Persons of literary sensibility are not likely to be interested in any philosophy beyond the purview of Mrs. Susanne Langer. It won't do, by the way, to be thrown off by Miss Nott's title. She does sometimes use the language of that jolly British whimsey that likes to understand human error in terms of the emperor's clothes or *Through the Looking Glass.* But her book is incisive, profound, and moving.

Some of the most valuable passages are those which examine the idols of the modern literary mind. *Item*: the belief that reason and the scientific method have (fortunately) "failed" and that it is therefore time for a higher, theological Reason. *Item*: that "Science" is a matter of atomic horrors, the "Machine," weights, measures, and scalpels. Yet "Science," as Miss Nott says, is not to be hypostatized or confined in this manner. Science is a habit of mind, a method of inquiry, a way of arriving at provisional truth by means of hypothesis and observation (in the present climate this commonplace definition sounds positively novel). *Item*: that there are two truths, one theological and one scientific. Yet, as Miss Nott says, "we know, if at all, in one way, not two." *Item*: that science is something that was perversely "chosen" or that fortuitously "set in" in the seventeenth century; that science stands or falls with mechanistic determinism; that the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle (and other modern theories of the sort) abolishes science, although, as Miss Nott says, the fact that at the ultra-microscopic level of reality we have to bank now on statistical probability rather than determinacy is hardly an excuse for banning scientific method from the psychological and social studies in which their religion enjoins the religious to be interested. *Item*: that, like science itself, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries do not belong to history, that they were only, as Eliot suggests, a "state of mind," a disastrous nightmare of liberalism and humanism which have left us (in T. E. Hulme's chamber-maidish phrase) with "the sloppy dregs of the Renaissance" of which we must now cleanse the world by means of "classicism" and a belief in man's fallen nature.

But the most fundamental and decisive error of the contemporary literary mind, at least in this country, is the idea that poetry is a religious activity and that the interests and effects of poetry and religion

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are the same. In varying ways the alliance of poetry and religion has been accepted among our literary critics as unquestioningly as Darwinism, Marxism, or Freudianism ever were. It has been sanctioned by the theories of Frazer, Lord Raglan, and Jane Harrison, according to whom myth and poetry originate in the ritual of the dying god. The ideas of Cassirer, Mrs. Langer, and Jung have widened the scope of mythic studies but have done nothing to shake the central dogma that allies poetry with religion. Yet empirical observation in anthropology, psychology, and aesthetics shows that poetry is allied both by nature and historically more closely with magic and myth than with religion. Magic is a kind of proto-science, and it is pragmatically akin to myth, a kind of poetry. So much, and more, an empirical anthropology, as opposed to the merely antiquarian theorizing of writers like Frazer, shows.

I have momentarily gone beyond the limits of Miss Nott's book in order to give some particularity to her general propositions about the relation of poetry, myth, and science to religion. As she eloquently tells us, it is the nature of religion to harden into dogma and authority. It is in the nature of poetry and science to respond to and explore experience, to have "an instinct for a living hypothesis," to make "verifiable apperceptions" (though in different ways), to "hover" at the point of man's biological fate, "between the impulse to creation and the impulse to destruction." The interest of the scientist and the poet is always to cure "the hypostatic disease to which all uses and all kinds of language are liable"; and "in the perversion of language . . . priest and politician are not very different from one another," for it is they who have the most immediate reasons to "fear meaning." In fact it is perennially true that "the scientist must protect the poet from the priests and the poet must protect the scientist from the politicians." This formulation states the whole tendency of the liberal, humanist tradition and places, not science and religion, but science and poetry at the polar centers of society, as, in the last century, writers as different as Arnold and Whitman did.

In much of her book Miss Nott is painstakingly concerned to understand how so great a literary critic as T. S. Eliot can have rested content with a presentation of theological ideas so random and cryptic as his has been. "He does not instruct or inculcate," observes Miss Nott, "he only manifests himself with baffling discontinuity." He does not argue his theology but tends vaguely to allude "to a whole corpus of ecclesiastical learning." He does not explain what dogmas are necessary

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for modern man and seems to be moved, like his followers and supporters, by only one: Original Sin (Miss Nott is so retrograde as to ask, sincerely, What is it?). She notes the "*fin-de-siècle* frivolity" of Eliot's remark about how "immense a relief" is "the possibility of damnation . . . in a world of electoral reform, plebiscites, sex reform and dress reform"—yet who actually lives in this "world"? To those who do not believe in Sin it would appear that most people live from day to day, not with the works of Susan B. Anthony or the days of Miss Bloomer, but with the struggle to survive and to enhance their survival with some modicum of pleasure, beauty, and significance.

Miss Nott is interested in the fact that Eliot rejects Arnold's moral-religious works as "unreadable" but without refuting them. Arnold, who still had the spirit of free inquiry, was ready, however imperfectly, to write about religion to the extent that he understood it, and in *God and the Bible* and *Literature and Dogma* he talked not about the mysteries but about "what we *can* know, the developing body of moral experience." In merely declaring Arnold "unreadable," Eliot, in effect, took up the propagandist notion of truth which is inevitable for proponents of what Miss Nott calls "metaphysical or dogmatic philosophical structures which live only in words." For if what Arnold said was true as an analysis of experience it is still true, and claims in its behalf do not have "to be made annually in order to preserve its validity," although claims in behalf of "hypostatical truth" do. These intellectual faults are all the more regrettable in a writer who as poet and critic has distinguished himself among moderns, indeed among writers of all time, as pre-eminent by his sense of fact.

Some of Miss Nott's best pages have to do with the famous dissociation of consciousness or sensibility which Mr. Eliot tells us happened in the seventeenth century, when, to the general detriment of poetry, a split occurred between thought and feeling. Miss Nott agrees that, in poetry, the split occurred and that Mr. Eliot and the modern tendency of poetry have done much to repair the damage. Eliot is not perfectly clear as to what caused the split; presumably that "liberalism" with which, as he said in *After Strange Gods,* Western society began to be "wormeaten" in the seventeenth century. Mr. Willey in *The Seventeenth Century Background* blames science. C. S. Lewis apparently blames the Devil. Miss Nott blames the recurring hypostasis of language which results from the "fear of meaning." She points out that "dissociation" is not something limited to the seventeenth century or to Miltonic verse but that it inheres in the paradoxical condition of man, in whom the opposition of thought and feeling becomes exacerbated to the ex-

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tent that he is unwilling or unable to be conscious of experience. There were splits of sensibility before the seventeenth century—St. Augustine and his time are classic examples. The Romantic poets healed a split in sensibility, even though they made a new one. The same may be said of Whitman (Lawrence's main point in *Studies in Classic American Literature*). The poet's duty when such a split occurs should be exercised through "the enjoyable admission of our own dialectic," says Miss Nott, rather than by retiring "upon the charity of some system which will give him intellectual food and shelter for the rest of his days" or by beginning with the assumption that the dissociated sensibility is the punishment for our Original Sin.

Miss Nott does indeed summon us to enjoyment, though she seems prepared to allow us to be sad. Her remarks on the relation of charity, as Christ understood it, to pleasure and truth are simple but profound. In his understanding of human beings, Christ's intellectual appeal was to experience and history. Mr. Eliot tries to base his idea of a Christian society on the abstract notion of man's sinfulness, forgetting that the root facts of any modern social thinking are the typists and clerks and so on whom he once saw in the waste land and forgetting, too, the notorious alliance in the contemporary world of absolute abstraction and violence. Miss Nott's ultimate moral objection to the neo-orthodox is that as dogmatists and authoritarians they are "at heart . . . concerned not with charity but with power." We know that power has its place in the world, that society is impossible without it. But we also know that in its public expressions it as easily destroys as enhances the free operation of the mind and the significant use of language.

Richard Chase

SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY

THE TRANSLATIONS OF EZRA POUND. With an introduction by Hugh Kenner. New Directions. $6.00.

That Pound is a bad translator, that he quite simply does not always know the meanings of the words which he is englishing, is, I take it, an open secret; yet Mr. Kenner, who provides an introduction for the present selection from a lifetime of Pound's work, plays games with himself and with us about the poet's errors, telling us, for instance, that when Pound translates "eorthan rices" (earthly kingdoms) as "earthen riches," this is no slip but a "sort of pun" with "a slightly wrong meaning but a completely right feeling." Mr. Kenner has his

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eye on "riches" alone, but "earthen" for "earthly" involves a more disturbing mistake, suggesting that Pound's trouble is with modern English as much as with the older form of the language. As a matter of fact, Pound is, contrary to widespread opinion, one of the most approximate exploiters of the mother tongue; and the diffuseness which contributes to his special appeal as well as his characteristic weaknesses, is as much a function of his imprecise vocabulary as of his famous wit.

I am not suggesting that the final word is said about Pound's translations when one has remarked that they are howlingly inaccurate, but unless one starts with such a confession, he cannot go forward at all; and there is no sense in implying that such an initial demurrer is pointless pedantry. To speak largely of "interchanges of voice and personality with the dead" without indicating that one is aware, for instance, of the mad hash Pound has made of the second stanza of Arnaut Daniel's *"L' aura amara"* is to substitute homage for criticism.

Certainly, Pound has made good poems incidentally in the course of making bad translations. The versions of Li Po, for example, strike me as charming pieces with a structure far more coherent than anything Pound has invented without a borrowed Muse. This has little to do with the question of faithfulness to the original—it is all worked-up *chinoiserie*; for Pound apparently took off from Fenollosa's rough translations of Japanese versions of the Chinese poet, whose original name Pound never even recovered from its Japanese rendering as Rihaku.

Here is a clue to the inner, perhaps the essential function of translation for Pound, translation as the endless search of a centerless poet for pseudo-centers. To distill more than an epigram, unaided, from his inner chaos has always been for Pound a matter of extraordinary effort, even real suffering; and he has more and more tended to abandon the effort—in favor of rendering the chaos itself in the guise of an ideally unfinished long poem, all middle and no definition. Had he lived in a happier time (the Renaissance which he so despises, for instance), when the distinction between translation and creation was not so rigidly drawn, he might have found fit employment for his wonderful facility inside of line and phrase in rendering other poets' work. But an impulse to make a monumental whole of his own, hopelessly confused with an infatuation with incoherence, has driven Pound beyond mere translation, beyond even the variations on a borrowed theme as in "Homage to Sextus Propertius," beyond the chanting through a borrowed persona or mask as in the pseudo-Provençal poems—on to the *Cantos*, in which the reworked verses of others echo like ghostly reproaches.

Pound has, however, never been conscious of this inner quest, or at

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least has never been prepared to confess it. He has rather thought of himself in his role of translator as a kind of eccentric schoolteacher, a mad pedant expounding difficult and forgotten texts in a classroom where he is not sure there are any students. Many of the translations included here appeared originally in critical, or more properly, pedagogic, essays: all of the Daniel, for example, and the Canzone of Calvacanti, the latter of which made its debut with the accompaniment of a most formidable apparatus of notes, comments and glossary, punctuated with unscholarly screams of annoyance and challenge. As a matter of fact, a good deal of the fun of such englishings seems gone once they have been detached (as they are in the present volume) from the half-cranky, half-pretentious contexts in which they grew.

Astonishingly, Pound has turned out to be really a successful teacher, though largely at second hand and through the good offices of T. S. Eliot, who has lent to Pound's erudite nuttiness the proper magisterial air, and thus passed him on to the newer generations who never miss a chance to gloss a joke or convert an outrage into an orthodoxy. The *name* of Arnaut Daniel, largely unread, of course, since the translations of Pound are slightly more impenetrable than the original even to one ignorant of Provençal, has become almost as sacred as that of Donne; and Cavalcanti is not without honor nor the *noh* play neglected. Some of Pound's enthusiasms have failed to take, Leopardi remaining, though respected, stubbornly unfashionable, and d'Annunzio, whom Pound touted (because, by God, he captured a province!) but did not translate, touching us not at all. Yet in the establishment of a new tradition, "The Tradition" that Eliot has glorified, Pound is a cultural Founding Father, a latter-day Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, ransacking Europe for a usable past, another unsuspected agent abroad for the Heiress of All the Ages, which is to say, for that American public he affected to spurn and abandon. Pound's is not, of course, the Europe dreamed from Heidelberg in the mild afterglow of German Romanticism; but it is a Europe which seems at first glance scarcely more congenial to the contemporary sensibility: the Europe of the pre-Raphaelites.

Pound's debt to Rossetti cannot be emphasized strongly enough, for it is at once so important and so improbable. By the time of *The Spirit of Romance,* his taste was set once and for all for that "century whose center is 1200" and its "two perfect gifts," the poems of Arnaut Daniel and the Church of San Zeno at Verona. It is all of a piece, the pre-Raphaelite distrust of the Renaissance and love for a prettified *Vita Nuova*; and the fashionable orientalizing that had survived from the *fin de siècle* to those dull years before the First World War. Later, of

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course, Pound came to deny his earlier motives, to disavow the misty pursuit of "Romance"—and to insist that he turned back to the twelfth century for the sake of restoring music to verse, or redeeming free verse, or destroying the spell of Milton, or opposing puritanical Christianity. "All these are clean, all without the hell-obsession," he boasted absurdly of Cavalcanti and his peers; but we see only the man rationalizing a boy's post-Victorian predilections.

In any case, his taste never changed; only the sermons were revised, the exempla remaining the same. To be sure, the translations themselves were metamorphosed in time; but the underlying, lisping sweetness always persisted, merely muddied over as Pound's resolve at all costs to be mad and to find a poetic diction proper to his madness overwhelmed him. Here are two versions of the opening of a *canso* by Arnaut Daniel. The first translation belongs to Pound's earliest work; the second dates from about 1920.

Only I know what over-anguish falls
Upon the love-worn heart through over-love.
Because of my desire so firm and whole
Toward her I loved on sight and since alway,
Which turneth not aside nor wavereth.
So, far from her I speak for her mad speech,
Who near her, for o'er much to speak, am dumb.

I only, and who elrische pain support,
Know out love's heart o'er borne by overlove,
For my desire that is so firm and straight
And unchanged since I found her in my sight
And unturned since she came within my glance,
That far from her my speech springs up aflame;
Near her comes not. So press the words to arrest it.

The "elrische" is the real offense, capping the uncalled-for involvement of the syntax and padding out of the sense—and destroying willfully (without even the excuse of rhyme) the original balance of "over-anguish" with "over-love." What is the point except to impose an ironical air of the archaic, to make a diction at once formal and irrational, to woo incoherence? Dante Gabriel Rossetti gone off his rocker! This is the image behind Pound's provençalizing, an image we especially honor today.

Do not misunderstand. I do not despise the poet and his devices; I want only to describe unequivocally what exists, what molds us, what

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has become a very touchstone of our aging "modernity." For if Pound's translations can give us little sense of Cavalcanti or Li Po or the Provençals—they can give us a very good sense, indeed, of that Comedian of Culture who is Pound, the quick-change artist in his famous repertory of Chinese Gentleman, Troubadour, and scholastic expounder of Love. And this, for better or for worse, is a key image of our own age, of the contemporary mind haunted by half-understood tags of a score of cultures, trying to translate into verse what was once passion and belief. Our Muse is the poet without a Muse, whom quite properly we acquit of treason (what remains to betray?) and consign to Saint Elizabeth's.

Leslie A. Fiedler

TOLSTOY AND HISTORY

THE HEDGEHOG AND THE FOX. By Isaiah Berlin. Simon and Schuster. $2.50.

Thanks to Turgenev, Flaubert was among the very first in Europe to read *War and Peace*. He read it with "shouts of joy and admiration," but (as Isaiah Berlin reminds us) also with horror: *"Il se repète! Et il philosophise!"* he told Turgenev in the same letter in which he raved about the force of Tolstoy's rendering of reality.

An artist who "philosophized." What a scandal that was for Flaubert, the ascetic of "pure" art. By "philosophizing," Tolstoy not only violated the canons of naturalistic art; he also, and above all, violated the "morality" of the artist as Flaubert understood and practiced it. It did not even occur to Flaubert that, in a historical novel, considerations on history could be at least as relevant as, in a "pure" novel like *L'Education Sentimentale,* the rather dull description (based, as we now know, on the perusal of the stagecoach schedules of the time and scientific treatises about the rocks and trees of the Fontainebleau forest) of the trip of Frédéric and the Maréchale going back to Paris just in time to be caught in the turmoil of the June uprising.

Flaubert's exclamation could well serve as an epigraph to most that has been written since then on Tolstoy: the artist is great, but his ideas are either confused, or false, or repellent, if not all of these together. From "pure" aesthetes to the bolsheviks, this has been the prevailing attitude toward Tolstoy.

In his concise and learned essay, which is by far the best analysis of Tolstoy's intellectual personality ever attempted, Isaiah Berlin has no trouble showing that such a judgment simply overlooks the facts: the first one of all being the seriousness of Tolstoy's interest in the prob-

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lem of History. Tolstoy started wondering about History when in his early twenties he said, "To write the genuine history of present-day Europe: there is an aim for the whole of one's life." No less than Hegel, no less than the positivistic and idealistic historians of his time and after, Tolstoy saw history as the only place where truth could be found. The meaning of life, the why of human actions and events, had to be looked for in the concreteness of historical facts, of individual and collective experiences as they actually occur in space and time, not in metaphysical speculations. "Like Marx," Berlin writes, "Tolstoy saw clearly:

that if history was a science, it must be possible to discover and formulate a set of true laws of history which, in conjunction with the data of empirical observation, would make prediction of the future (and 'retrodiction' of the past) as feasible as it had become, say, in geology or astronomy. But he saw more clearly than Marx and his followers that this had, in fact, not been achieved, and said so with his usual dogmatic candour, and reinforced his thesis with arguments designed to show that the prospect of achieving this goal was non-existent; and clinched the matter by observing that the fulfillment of this scientific hope would end human life as we knew it: "if we allow that human life can be ruled by reason, the possibility of life (i.e., as a spontaneous activity involving consciousness of free will) is destroyed."

To "positivistic" historians, Tolstoy, in 1852, at twenty-four, addressed the contemptuous remark: "History is nothing but a collection of fables and useless trifles. . . . Who wants to know that Ivan's second marriage, to Temyruk's daughter, occurred on August 21, 1562, whereas his fourth, to Anna Alekseyevna Koltovskaya, occurred in 1572? . . ." His objection to "idealistic" history-writers, on the other hand, was the ineliminable contrast between the explanation in terms of general ideas and all-embracing causes promised by them, and the sudden intervention (which they could not but acknowledge) of individual will and chance at the decisive moment. Finally, Tolstoy judged all historians according to one single scathing criterion: "The greater the claim, the greater the lie." And he concluded: "The new history is like a deaf man replying to questions which nobody puts to him. . . ." The reverse of which was true too, of course: history, for Tolstoy, had also the peculiarity of remaining deaf to the questions one puts to it, the important ones: why things happen as they do? why do men act the way they act? what is the meaning of life? how should one live?

To sum it up, Tolstoy did not deny that the historian could list facts: (but "no more than 0.01 per cent of all the facts that actually constitute the history of peoples") according to a chronological and systematic order, or that he could construct explanations based on a

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given ideology. What Tolstoy maintained was that history failed precisely in what nineteenth-century philosophers and students of history considered to be its primary function: giving an account of facts and events in wholly concrete and rationally adequate terms, rather than of abstractions even more deceptive than metaphysical fantasies. Hence, what was left was, on one side, the history of historians, either unreal or mythical, and, on the other, history as it is actually experienced by the individual and the community. Between the two, an unbridgeable chasm, as between fiction and truth.

Out of such contradictions, and such skepticism, the idea of writing *War and Peace* was born. The novel was not only historical, but about history. History, and the destiny of man in history, was the great subject that had dawned on the mind of Tolstoy, the artist. The intellectual problems connected with the subject are inextricable from the artist's vision. Mr. Berlin makes this point with great force, showing, among other things, how completely beside the point it is, in dealing with Tolstoy, to judge him according to an aesthetic view, that of the "pure artist," which he, precisely as an artist, rejected entirely. From Turgenev to Flaubert, and from Flaubert to Gide, the *moral* duty of the artist consists in limiting himself to "the analysis and description of the experience and the relationships and problems and inner lives of individuals." The rest is "philosophizing," aesthetically bad and morally wrong, a violation of the artist's supreme allegiance to art. Tolstoy did not believe in this at all. He wanted indeed to describe individual feelings and passions, but to limit himself to that would have seemed to him preposterous, tantamount to taking life out of its own context. "For this was not," writes Berlin, "to give an answer to the question of what there is, and why and how it comes to be and passes away, but to turn one's back upon it altogether, and stifle one's desire to discover how men live in society, and how they are affected by one another and by their environment." In this sense, and keeping in mind his marvelous "naturalistic" feeling for the universal rhythm of life, one could say that for Tolstoy writing a story was the same as writing history.

The aim of *War and Peace* was to show "what really happens" as contrasted not only to the supposedly rational constructions of the historians, but to the inevitably distorted view of events which forms itself in the minds of those who participate in them, or pretend to guide them.

Neither a mystic nor a visionary, incapable of believing in anything that was not concrete, the individual fact in history, the author of *War and Peace* found himself faced with the following paradox. On the one hand there was the real life of individuals, a succession of feelings, impulsions and incidents. On this level of "real" life, historical events,

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wars and battles appear as a series of happenings that have no rational order. On the other hand, above and beyond all this, there is History, the great movement that carries individuals and peoples away, as if they were completely determined by it. The true law of this movement eludes both the individual who is subject to it and the historian who observes it from the outside. The only truth that can be affirmed about it is, according to Tolstoy, that events are determined by a force, a "power," a necessity which dominates everything and everybody from Napoleon to the last soldier. From this we get the well-known opposition between Napoleon who claims to direct events, and Kutuzov who does not, with Kutuzov being closer to the truth insofar as he recognizes and submits to the inescapable force that drives men before it. "The greater the claim, the greater the lie."

That is Tolstoy's argument reduced to its barest outlines. But mere polemicizing could not satisfy him. It was the truth he was after. And in his search for it, he falls into a series of stupendous contradictions. If the truth about history cannot be found either in the constructions of the historians or in the experience of the actors themselves, where is it?

The only character in *War and Peace* who can be said to be the repository of *a* truth is the simple peasant Platon Karataiev, who makes no claim at all. But even if the "natural" wisdom of Platon Karataiev is recognized, the basic question remains unanswered, as Tolstoy is well aware. What is history? Why do things happen as they do and not otherwise? And, above all, why do men act as they do? What is the power that drives them to kill and die as masses, while as individuals they do not want to kill and die, but simply to go on living?

Confronted by the contradiction between men's intuitive experience of freedom in action and the evident fact that large-scale events must be determined by general causes, Tolstoy seeks two ways out, one based on the possibility of historical knowledge, the other, more important, on truth in life. As for the first, he argues that in order to give an account of historical events one must be able to "integrate the infinitesimals," that is to find the law covering Napoleon's cold on the eve of Borodino as well as the disposition of his troops and all the innumerable incidents and accidents that make up the reality of a battle—without establishing *a priori* a hierarchy of importance. Mr. Berlin properly notes that this is the solution attempted by Bergson (and, we might add, Proust), the reconstruction of "real duration" from the inside. Even if it were possible to know all the infinitesimals that are to be put together, it must be remembered, however, that they are by essence qualitatively different from each other, being as they are human phenomena and not mathematical symbols, nor scientific data. The integration could not be purely rational,

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since it would require the outside intervention of a decision to integrate according to a particular idea or intuition. Moreover, one would still have to make room for that same Necessity whose presence the infinite number of incidents reveals without explaining.

Even more powerful (and I would like to add, more illuminating) is the conflict that Tolstoy unveiled when he tried to express the verity that could reconcile for man the experiences of war and peace. Isaiah Berlin expresses it this way. For the great Russian, only the private lives of individuals, made up of feelings, passions, thoughts, and "natural" relationships is real. Public life and history are abstractions, if not lies. But the sphere of private life is also the realm of illusion. It is precisely the experience of his own spontaneity and freedom, the indubitable realness of his own interests and motives, that prevents man, be he commander-in-chief, simple soldier, or historian, from admitting the existence of an inexorable Necessity that dominates every individual will and eludes all reason. The "natural" life of individuals certainly does not explain History; it does not tell us what is the very real "power" that manifests itself in the movements of peoples, the disasters of war, and the outcomes of battles. Moreover, it is not even the ground of truth; an individual who has lived through historical upheavals has learned at least one thing, that truth cannot be found in one's private life, but in the recognition of that which infinitely overshadows it. This is what Prince André is made aware of.

From his analysis of Tolstoy's ideas on history, Mr. Berlin draws the dramatic image of a Tolstoy divided against himself, in revolt against his more authentic nature: he "was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog," as Mr. Berlin puts it. The image is borrowed from a fragment of Archilochus, which says: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Knowing many things very sharply, Tolstoy could not rest until he had also learned the "one big thing" that really mattered to him. Endowed by nature with a power of "almost miraculous evocation of the full, untranslatable individuality of the individual," his implacable craving for the absolute leads him to "expelling everything that does not submit to some very general, very simple standard." This, according to Mr. Berlin, is the root of Tolstoy's powerful contradictions.

That there are contradictions in Tolstoy it is easy to concede. But that they come from his wanting to be something he was not is doubtful. As a matter of fact, there seems to be a marvelous harmony and consistency, rather than a conflict, between his sense of the irreducible individuality of every object and every being, and his yearning for a

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clear vision of the whole that embraces this richness and multiplicity. What is important to recognize is that what Tolstoy was seeking, and, almost in spite of himself, finding, was not an abstract principle or a theodicy but a simple vision of simple, elemental facts. This he persisted in seeking until the very end in the characteristic Tolstoyan fashion by assaulting and denying what to him appeared false in the light, precisely, of the "untranslatable individuality of the individual." He was above all, in his own dogmatic way, an enemy of dogmatism. Mr. Berlin makes this point quite clear. A fox, a hedgehog, or both, what Tolstoy attacked in his polemic, and deflated in his artistic representation, was the dominant nineteenth-century idea that man could obtain the true laws of history, thereby justifying his demiurgical claim that he could direct events and *make* history. The symbol of this insolent claim, he very pointedly saw embodied in Napoleon, "the *Weltgeist* on horseback." Once this is agreed upon, the contradictions with which Tolstoy found himself confronted appear as a series of passionate probings into the *limits* of historical knowledge and historical action.

The "one big thing" that Tolstoy got to know in the course of his probings, Mr. Berlin points out over and over again, and especially where he touches upon Tolstoy's sense of the "inexorable power of the present moment." It is the fact that we are what we are and find ourselves in a definite point of time and space and in a definite social environment, all of us together, determining and limiting each other with our thoughts no less than with our actions, and no one of us with the power or the knowledge to control our situation. This limit is as certain as the hardest "fact"; and "being in history," for Tolstoy, signifies that or nothing at all.

Tolstoy undoubtedly saw that if one refused to explain what happened by Providence or by the constructions of a simple rationalism, one ended by glimpsing a Necessity that was neither "ideal" nor physical, and which revealed itself in actual experience. It was not the concept of Destiny, but destiny itself, the reality of which is proved by the fact that it can be grasped by no formula; a destiny that struck not from heaven but from earth, never so awesome as when, in the course of human events, it took the form of man himself. "Power expresses the fact that we depend on others," Tolstoy wrote in an article in which he tried to explain the import of the ideas he had expressed in *War and Peace.*

Nicola Chiaromonte

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DREAMS AND LONGINGS OF A CLASSICAL SCHOLAR

HADRIAN'S MEMOIRS. By Marguerite Yourcenar. Translated from the French by Grace Frick in collaboration with the author. Farrar, Straus and Young. $4.00.

This book is an astonishing feat. Begin it, and you know immediately that you are in the hands of a scholar-artist who is unusually cultivated and *fine,* and that you are being led into an experience that has been carefully shaped for you, its smallest effects measured in advance. Yet this mind, which is at once so superbly cultivated and unassimilable, which knows the effect it is creating and yet can be seen standing serenely outside the design it has created, is so enraptured with its subject that it can virtually be watched dreaming about it, with open eyes, without any self-consciousness whatever.

The book is an act of love toward the classical world—even more, toward the fabled image of that world, now all *luxe et calme et volupté.* The prose has a caressing, elegiac, Virgilian pace: Hadrian knows he is dying, and in the autumn of his days, writes his autobiography to his legal grandson, Marcus Aurelius. The phrasing, which the emperor himself seems to appreciate even as he puts it down, exists for the pleasure that a man can take in finding this strange world itself so assimilable and expressible. And the only word for it all is what *we* call "classical" —each phrase seems to be lovingly handled not only for its truth, but for the author's triumph at being able to demonstrate the wisdom that Hadrian felt he possessed. This embrace of language itself, this book of Hadrian's wisdom, is so beautifully done that finally one can only think of it as a kind of classic anthology. So lovingly and cleverly have the bits and pieces of the ancient world been put together, from the motion of the rowers on the Nile to the mystery religions in Egypt and the Jewish war in Palestine, that the book does finally resemble rather more the scholar's poetry which is the historic sense in our time than the free inner dynamics of the storyteller. In the sense that "The Waste Land" is deliberately an anthology of a world represented as coming apart, this book is the anthology of a world which now can be grasped with a single embrace.

And yet this sense of "classicalness"—the temples, the bathing places, the costumes, the gold—is not what one gets most from the book; all that is in the background and occasionally does have the appearance of being worked up, of being fitted to such knowledge as we have. The main experience one gets from the book is the over-

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whelming sense of Hadrian's physical presence, of our having been put directly into his mind.

Now this is a remarkable feat; and it is one that could have been accomplished only as a feat of love itself. For the sense of Hadrian's physical existence, of the working of his consciousness, is so strong that one can virtually see the hair on his arms and accept the strange combination of soldierliness and narcissism (after the suicide of his favorite, Antinous, he tells us how he stifled his tears in a cushion), of cultural piety and Roman brutality. We even have the sense of being inside him, of seeing the world entirely through his eyes, so that we assent to his prejudices not because we agree with them but because, since we are in his mind, it is only nature to have them. Hadrian, in this book, dominates the center of the world, he bestrides our consciousness, like one of those statues of the beloved Antinous which, as he tells us, he was always ordering his sculptors to make more and more lifelike, but which he kept hollow inside, so that they would be portable. The characterization is all in the limner's art, in the look of the face, and this, caught in the wonderful portrait on the jacket by Marshall Lee—voluptuary, reserved, sad, literally double-sexed—this is the look of the statue in the museum, of the wisdom in the anthology. It is the look of someone who calmly bears all our love for him, our hunger for his stability, his calm, his *classicism.*

Here everything fits into place as in life it never does; here all experience is transfigured into memory and all memory into intelligence; here convicts die in the stadium dressed in coats of gold that Hadrian had contemptuously cast away when presented to him by a fawning courtier—and we assent, we assent to everything. Here the dead take their place among the living. There is one marvelous scene where Hadrian, mourning the dead Antinous, wanders up and down the sculpture court, lighting up and touching the statues as if to interrogate the dead. So we walk up and down with Hadrian, and know that even our sighs are wise, and that everything that has been said well has been said best in Greek. The dead tempt us with their secret, and interrogating them, we try endlessly, as Hadrian says, to look behind the curtain. Though we must desist—these are the classic tears—still, there is something proud about this effort; we are content to grope in the dark, as compared with the illusions of the Christians and the fanaticism of the Jews. This ripe bereft skepticism, which knows that it may be backing a loser in the great lottery of death, nevertheless sees itself, in endless mirrors, preparing its own portrait for posterity. This is what one gets from the book. And even though Antinous the beloved may be

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supposed to have drowned himself, at twenty, for Hadrian's sake, in order to pierce the curtain first, we are disposed to admire not this sacrifice but Hadrian, to side with Hadrian, for like him we can only be amazed at how much we are loved, how foolish Antinous was to try his life for our sake. At the end (for the classical is what survives), it is Hadrian who makes up the record, and as Hadrian, we watch ourselves sighing, and groaning, being exquisite and beautiful about death and life and Antinous, too. Here, in short, is the ideal aesthetic object which can be contemplated in a classical scholar's dreams, for this object finally sees itself being admired, and with a faint shudder, a smiling caress, puts its arm out to show itself being admired.

Now this stasis, this old man dying, who is past everything—this is the object of Mme. Yourcenar's adoration, but this is not all of it. One reason for the classical scholar's rapture is that with such a man, as with all things ancient, everything is of a piece and the world is in our hands, so that studying this man we are in Egypt with the necromancers and in Greece with Plato's shade; with Hadrian we read everything, have a thought about everything, and go everywhere—Egypt, Palestine, Greece. Above all, we can linger in Greece. For Hadrian is more than emperor: he is the Roman Hellenist *per excellence,* and yet not grave like his "grandson" Marcus Aurelius, not so disposed to die nobly, not that content to round out his life with a maxim. In fact, Hadrian is the ideal sensualist: not such a beast as Nero, nor such a goody-goody as Marcus Aurelius.

And it is this—this sensual subtlety and indifference, if you like; this suggestion Hadrian always gives us of conducting his sexual life so casually, of having a final secret; of allowing us this far into his mind but of barring us, with a little grimace at our vulgarity, at the door to the bedchamber—it is this that constitutes the real heart of the classicist's image, its fabled sensual freedom. It was this that haunted Nietzsche, who began as a classical scholar. But Mme. Yourcenar is not troubled by it: she sees, with a little smile, a light in Hadrian's temple that she has kept her eye trained on all the whole. This is what she loves in the past and this is the serenity on the face of the past: not only does it all fit, but there is this final ambiguity, this secret, in a field in which the explicit detail is so necessary, where everything must be made clear so as to assure us that these bones live. We see Hadrian's arm, but not what he reaches for with it, or which consummation he prepares.

Alfred Kazin

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THE CONSERVATISM OF DESPAIR

A PROGRAM FOR CONSERVATIVES. By Russell Kirk. Regnery. $4.00.

This latest product from the busy pen of Mr. Kirk will help observers make a more accurate appraisal of the "new" conservatism. There are several questions to answer: first, is the conservative tag an accurate description of the movement? Orwell had said a conservative is "a thing that does not exist nowadays," and Mr. Kirk himself had been puzzled by the failure of Trilling and others to recognize a conservative recrudescence. Second, if the movement is "conservatism," is it a reincarnation of the great tradition or is it a creature of quite another kind, masquerading in the vestments of the dead? Third, assuming the genus, what is the species? There is an obvious difference in kind between the mind of de Jouvenel, for example, and the writings of Mr. Kirk.

There are, I suggest, three types of conservative thought, and this book represents the third stage in its dialectic. The first stage, primitive conservatism, is silent; rooted in agrarian life and shielded in an arcanum of power, it does not argue. Issues implying the deliberation of ends do not arise; "policy" is restricted to limited choices of means. In the second stage, I think, conservatism reaches its zenith. In its great debate with radical and liberal thought, it rigorously criticizes the ends and techniques of policy-makers and constructs a policy of its own. In this stage there is a conservative *mind*. The next stage, tertiary conservatism, lives on the intellectual capital of the previous stage, but in its heart is a conservatism of despair: despair of policy itself, of argument, of ideas. Destitute of thought, it substitutes propaganda for ideas in order to stay alive; wearing a double mask, it is an ideology pretending to oppose ideology. Its polemic shifts from policy to attitudes. In its despair it nurses an atrabilious hatred of sanguine commitments. Thus the conservative mind mutates into the conservative spleen.

Mr. Kirk represents splenetic conservatism—he is an ideologue who hates "ideologists"—but he vacillates between the tertiary and secondary stages. The antinomies of his position result from a conflict between the impulse of despair and his dependence on the mind of the great tradition. He cannot maneuver for long without leaping into the arms of Babbitt and More. His previous book was an interpretation of the second stage and left us hoping for another volume carrying the argument on the same level. But it seems the author had invested his scholarly capital and is content to live on the interest.

There is a lot of cantankerous energy in the present book, but the polemic is strident and impotent; it never grapples with real enemies but

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disposes of them by distortion and the erection of straw men. Reversing his own criticism of someone else, one can say that Kirk's knowledge of the radical and liberal mind is in inverse proportion to his acquaintance with conservative theories. He asks us not to identify conservatism with the conservatism of mediocrity or with the stupid conservatives, yet he will not grant the same courtesy to his opponents: all liberals, he implies, are fatuous liberals.

Nevertheless, a glimmer of the best elements in conservatism shines through the book: assertion of the necessities for law in social life and for restraint on power; the call for order; recognition of the relevance of wise intuition; demonstration of the interdependence of religion, morals and politics; and awareness that economic activity should be subordinated to higher values. Thus, even though at his frequent worst he stifles in his own venom, at his seldom best he stands for High Toryism, which was a remarkable animal in its time.

The "program" itself, a collection of addresses and previously published essays, purports to deal with ten "urgent questions": (1) the mind, (2) the heart, (3) social boredom, (4) community, (5) social justice, (6) wants, (7) order, (8) power, (9) loyalty, and (10) tradition. Best insights are found in the chapter on social boredom and in some parts of the chapters on justice and power. The problems are faced mainly by invoking Burke, Newman, Irving Babbitt, P. E. More, and company. The remaining space is devoted to flagellating persons of whom the author disapproves. Riesman is singled out as *bête noir* and gets the heaviest bastinado. Some others who get a drubbing are professors (with apologies for having sojourned in the academy himself), intellectuals ("When a man is both a professor and an intellectual, he is loathsome; when he is professor and intellectual and ideologist rolled into one, he is unbearable"), liberals ("distraught and frightened"), *Partisan Review,* Bentham, Mill, Marx, Marxists, Dewey, Deweyites, Kinsey, planners and doctrinaire radicals.

Mr. Kirk, of course, is a doctrinaire conservative; he is full of assertion but offers little original analysis, and is lost when he leaves the laps of Babbitt and More. His critical touchstone is what other conservatives have said. Thus, an idea is evil if conservatives have opposed it. Bellamy, for instance, is dismissed because William Morris thought ill of him; hedonism is out because Dr. Johnson exploded it long ago. If Dr. Johnson hated a cause only a fool could espouse it. And if Dr. Johnson, Burke, Coleridge, Ruskin and B. I. Bell hated a cause, then, good heavens, only dissolute radicals full of malice and Marxism would come near the thing.

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Among Mr. Kirk's several difficulties is his entrapment in oversimplifications. For example, he implies all social evil may be attributed to the *hybris* of reformers; also that the ravages of industrialism are the legacy of utilitarian doctrine. There is no room in his system for multiple causation. Furthermore, he tends to blur the distinction between "first principles," which conservatives supposedly love, and "abstract concepts," which they hate. Sometimes the difference seems to be merely that when a conservative speaks he employs first principles whereas a radical's statements are nearly always abstract concepts.

Kirk recognizes social reform is necessary in many cases: the modern conservative must improvise and create as well as obey prejudice and prescription. But in a particular case, what if the two conflict? Which is to prevail? He never comes to grips with such problems, engaging instead in the popular pastime of conjuring up the horrors of creeping socialism. He is not wise enough to recognize that the insidious bureaucrat is a versatile beast, as comfortable in conservative black as in Jacobin scarlet. He makes much of Orwell's O'Brien but has missed Orwell's insight that O'Brien by any other name still smells like oligarchy.

He recognizes that the problem of justice underlies every social problem. But his rendering of the meaning of justice is an iteration of the classical formula, without revealing that what is a man's "due" or "nature" is a matter for interpretation. Who shall be the interpreter: tradition? the state? conservatives? Mr. Kirk? Remember, the classical formula is a fine defense of slavery. Furthermore, granting the principle of distributive justice, the very reformers Mr. Kirk hates were concerned —most of them—to work for conditions in which the principle could *begin* to operate. Mr. Kirk's infatuation with "the unbought grace of life" recognizes it is denied to many who are wealthy, but cannot see it is "unbought" by millions of others because they cannot afford it.

E. V. Walter

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LENZ

(*Continued from page* 46)

made him breathless. And now so dead! He despaired of himself; then he went down on his knees, he wrung his hands, he stirred up everything that was in him—but all was dead, quite dead! Then he implored God to give him a sign, to work a miracle through him; then he tormented himself, fasted, lay on the floor in a dream.

On the 3rd of February he heard that a child had died at Fouday; Friederike was her name. He took this up like a fixed idea. He withdrew to his room and fasted for one day. On the 4th he suddenly entered Madame Oberlin's room; he had smeared his face with ashes and demanded an old sack. She was startled, but gave him what he wanted. He wrapped the sack around himself like a penitent and set out for Fouday. The people in the village were already used to him; many a strange tale about him had circulated there. He entered the house where the dead child lay. The people were pursuing their business indifferently; he was shown to a room, the child was lying on straw placed on a wooden table, dressed in her shirt.

Lenz shuddered when he touched her cold limbs and saw the half-open, glassy eyes. The child seemed so forsaken, and he himself so feeble and lonely. He threw himself down upon the dead body. Death frightened him, a violent agony overcame him; these features, this still face would have to decay—he went down on his knees, he prayed with all the anguish of despair that God might work a miracle through him and recall the child to life, weak and unhappy though he was: then he withdrew into himself and concentrated all his will power upon one point. For a long time he sat there motionless. Then he rose and clasped the child's hands in his, and said loudly and earnestly: "Arise and walk!" But soberly the walls re-echoed his voice, as though to mock him, and the corpse remained cold. Half mad, he collapsed on the floor; then terror seized him, he rushed out, and away into the mountains.

Clouds were passing swiftly across the moon; now all was in darkness, now the nebulous, vanishing landscape was revealed in the moonlight. He ran up and down. In his breast Hell was rehearsing a song of triumph. The wind sounded like the singing of Titans. He felt capable of clenching an enormous fist, thrusting it up into heaven, seizing God and dragging Him through His clouds; capable of masticating the world with his teeth and spitting it into the face of the Creator; he swore, he

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blasphemed. Thus he arrived at the highest point of the mountains, and the uncertain light stretched down toward the white masses of stone, and the heavens were a stupid blue eye, and the moon, quite ludicrous, idiotic, stood in the midst. Lenz had to laugh loudly, and as he laughed atheism took root in him and possessed him utterly, steadily, calmly, relentlessly. He no longer knew what it was that had moved him so much before, he felt cold; he thought he would like to go to bed now, and went his way through the uncanny darkness, cold and unshakable—all was empty and hollow to him, he was compelled to run home, and went to bed.

On the following day he felt intense horror when he remembered his condition on the previous night. Now he stood on the brink of the abyss, where a mad desire urged him to look into its depths again and again and to repeat this torment. Then his fear increased, for what confronted him was nothing less than the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Some days later Oberlin returned from Switzerland much sooner than expected. Lenz was upset by this. But he became more cheerful when Oberlin told him about his friends in Alsace. Oberlin walked about the room, unpacked his things, put them away. He came to talk about Pfeffel,[6] praising the happiness of a country parson's life. Also he proceeded to advise Lenz to comply with his father's wishes, to take up his profession again, to return home. He told him: "Honor thy father and thy mother," and more in this strain. The conversation violently disquieted Lenz; he sighed deeply, tears welled from his eyes, he spoke abruptly: "Yes, I know, but I can't bear it; do you want to drive me away? In you alone is the way to God. But it's all over with me! I've fallen away, I'm damned for eternity, I'm the Wandering Jew." Oberlin told him that this was precisely what Jesus had died for, that he should turn to Him with fervor and would then partake of His mercy.

Lenz raised his head, wrung his hands and said: "Ah! Divine consolation!" Then, suddenly gracious, he asked what had become of the lady. Oberlin replied that he knew nothing whatever about her, but that he would help him in all things; but Lenz must inform him of the place, circumstances and of her identity. Lenz answered incoherently: "Oh, she's dead! Is she still alive? You angel! She loved me, I loved her, she was worthy of it—you angel! This damnable jealousy, I sacrificed her—she loved another man also—I loved her, she was worthy of it—O dear mother, she also loved me. I'm a murderer!" Oberlin replied that perhaps all these persons were still alive, contentedly perhaps; whatever their condition now, once Lenz had been wholly converted in

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his heart, God could and would do so much for them in answer to his prayers and tears that the service he would have done them would perhaps outweigh the harm he had already done. This gradually calmed Lenz, who went back to his painting.

In the afternoon he returned to Oberlin. On his left shoulder he had placed a piece of fur and in his hand he carried a bunch of birch rods, which he had been asked to deliver to Oberlin together with a letter. He gave the rods to Oberlin and asked him to beat him with them. Oberlin took them from him, kissed him several times on the mouth, and said: "These are the only strokes I can give you." He asked him to calm himself and to make his peace with God by himself, as any number of scourgings could not remove a single sin; Jesus had made this His business and it was to Him that Lenz should turn. Lenz went away.

During supper he was, as usual, somewhat pensive. Yet he spoke of one thing and another, but with anxious haste. At about midnight Oberlin was awakened by a noise. Lenz was running through the courtyard, calling out the name "Friederike" in a hollow, metallic voice, though in confusion and despair; he flung himself into the basin, splashed about in it, out again and up to his room, down again to the fountain, and continued in this way several times. At last he grew quiet. The maids, who lived in the nursery immediately below his room, said they had often, but particularly during this same night, heard a moaning sound which they could compare only with the sound of a reed pipe. Perhaps it was Lenz whining in a hollow, terrible, despairing voice.

Next morning Lenz did not appear at the usual time. At last Oberlin went up to his room; Lenz was lying in bed, rigid and motionless. Oberlin had to address him several times before he received an answer; at last Lenz said: "Yes, vicar, you see it's boredom, boredom! Oh it's very boring! Really, I no longer know what to say. I've already drawn all sorts of figures on the wall." Oberlin told him to direct his thoughts toward God, whereupon Lenz laughed and said: "Yes, if I were as fortunate as you are, fortunate enough to find such a pleasant pastime, yes, in that case I imagine you could fill in the time quite pleasantly. All out of idleness: for most of us pray out of boredom, others fall in love out of boredom, some are virtuous and some are evil; only I am nothing, nothing, and I don't even feel like doing away with myself; it really is too boring!

O God, in the wave of thy light,
At thy noontide's glistening height,
My long-waking eyes have grown sore.
Shall the healing night come no more?"

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Oberlin looked at him with displeasure and prepared to go. Lenz flitted after him, fixing him with a ghastly look; "You see, now I have an idea after all, if I could only distinguish whether I'm dreaming or awake; you see, it's very important, we must look into it."—Then he flitted back into bed.

In the afternoon Oberlin wished to pay a visit in the neighborhood. His wife had already left. He was about to leave when someone knocked on the door, and Lenz came in, his body bent forward, his head hanging down; his whole face and part of his clothing covered with ashes, his left hand supporting his right arm. He asked Oberlin to pull his arm, since he had twisted it in the act of throwing himself out of the window; but since nobody had seen him do it he did not want anyone else to know. Oberlin was violently shocked, but said nothing; he did what Lenz asked him to do. Immediately afterwards he wrote to the schoolmaster at Bellefosse, asking him to come down, and giving him instructions; then he rode away.

The man arrived. Lenz had often seen him before and had become attached to him. The schoolmaster pretended he had come to discuss certain matters with Oberlin and would then leave. Lenz asked him to stay, and so they remained together. Lenz suggested a walk to Fouday. He visited the grave of the child whom he had once tried to raise from the dead, knelt down several times, kissed the earth on the grave, seemed to be praying, but confusedly plucked up some of the flowers that grew on the grave, to keep as a souvenir, returned to Waldbach, turned back again, and Sebastian with him. Sometimes he walked slowly and complained of a great weakness in his limbs, then again with desperate haste; the landscape frightened him, it was so narrow that he was afraid of colliding with every object he could see. An indescribable feeling of discomfort came upon him, his companion began to be a burden to him; also, perhaps, he guessed his intention, and now tried to get rid of him. Sebastian seemed to give in to him, but found secret means of informing his brother of the danger, and now Lenz had two keepers instead of one. He continued to drag them along with him; at last he returned to Waldbach, and as they approached the village, turned about quick as lightning and leaped away like a stag, in the direction of Fouday. While they were looking for him at Fouday, two shopkeepers approached them and told them that a stranger who confessed that he was a murderer had been arrested in one of the houses and had been bound, but that surely he could not be a murderer. They ran to the house and found it so. A young man, intimidated by Lenz's awkward gestures, had bound him. They released him and brought him safely to Waldbach, where they

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found Oberlin and his wife, who had returned in the meantime. Lenz looked confused. But when he found that his reception was kind and affectionate, his courage revived; his face changed favorably, he thanked his two escorts politely, even tenderly, and the evening passed quietly. Oberlin persistently implored him not to take any more baths, to remain in his bed and to rest during the night, and, if he could not sleep, to converse with God. He promised, and did so the following night. The maids heard him pray almost all night long.

The following morning he went up to Oberlin's room in a cheerful mood. When they had discussed various matters, he said with extreme gentleness: "Dearest vicar, the lady of whom I was telling you has died, yes, died—the angel!"—"How do you know that?"—"Hieroglyphics, hieroglyphics!" and then he looked heavenwards and said again: "Yes, died—hieroglyphics!" Then not another word could be got out of him. He sat down to write some letters and gave them to Oberlin, asking him to add a few lines to them.

Meanwhile his condition had become increasingly hopeless. All the peacefulness he had drawn from Oberlin's companionship and the valley's stillness was gone; the world which he had wished to put to some use had suffered an immense rift; he felt no hatred, no love, no hope—a terrible emptiness, and yet a torturing restlessness, an impatient impulse to fill this void. He possessed nothing. What he did he did consciously and yet under the compulsion of an inner urge. When he was alone he felt so horribly lonely that he constantly talked, called out to himself in a loud voice, and then again he was startled and it seemed as though a stranger's voice had spoken to him. In conversation he frequently stuttered, an indescribable fear possessed him, he had lost the conclusion of his sentence; then he thought he must hold onto the word he had last spoken, say it again and again, and it was only with greatest exertion of his will that he suppressed these impulses. The good people were deeply grieved when sometimes, in his quieter moments, he sat with them and spoke without difficulty, and then suddenly began to stammer and an unspeakable fear was expressed in his features, when convulsively he seized the person nearest to him by the arm, and only gradually recovered himself. When he was by himself or reading a book, it was even worse; all his mental activity was often held up by a single word. If he thought about a stranger or if he pictured that person vividly to himself, then it was as if he himself became that person; he became utterly confused, and at the same time he felt an unending urge to do violence in his mind to every thing and person; nature, men and women, only

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Oberlin excepted—all was dreamlike, cold. He amused himself by mentally turning the houses upside down, dressing and undressing people, by thinking out the most extravagant pranks. Sometimes he felt an irresistible urge to carry out whatever project he happened to be hatching in his head, and then he made the most horrible faces. Once he was sitting next to Oberlin, the cat was lying opposite him on a chair. Suddenly his eyes became fixed, he kept them riveted upon the animal; then slowly he slipped off his chair, likewise the cat; it seemed to be spellbound by his gaze, grew immensely frightened, arched and bristled its back in terror. Lenz, making catlike sounds, his face ghastly, distorted; as though in desperation they hurled themselves at each other, till at last Madame Oberlin rose to separate them. Then again he was deeply ashamed of himself. His nocturnal torments increased terribly. It was only with the greatest difficulty that he could go to sleep at all after first trying to fill the terrible void. Then between sleep and waking he fell into a dreadful state; he collided with some gruesome thing, it was horrible, madness clutched at him; he started up, bathed in sweat, uttered the most piercing shrieks, and only gradually came to himself again. Then he had to begin with the simplest objects in order to come to his senses. Really it was not he who did so, but a powerful instinct of self-preservation; he seemed to be split in two, with one part of him trying to save the other and calling out to itself; gripped by the most violent fear, he would recite poems again and again or tell himself stories until he recovered himself.

Even in the daytime he had these attacks, and then they were still more terrible; previously daylight had saved him from them. Then it seemed to him that he alone existed, that the world was only a fragment of his imagination, that there was nothing but he himself, and he the eternally damned, Satan, left to himself and to his painful imaginings. He tore through his past life with blinding speed, and then said: "Consequential, consequential"; if somebody spoke, he said: "Inconsequential, inconsequential";—it was the cleft of irremediable madness, a madness throughout eternity.

The urge for self-preservation would surprise him, he would fling himself into Oberlin's arms, cling to them as though he wanted to take refuge inside him. Oberlin was the only person who was alive to him and through whom life was still revealed to him. Then gradually Oberlin's voice would recall him to his senses; he would kneel down before him, his hands resting in Oberlin's hands, his face covered with cold sweat but resting on Oberlin's lap, his whole body trembling and heaving. Oberlin's pity for him was endless, the family were on their knees,

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praying for Lenz in his misery, the maids ran away and took him for one possessed. And when he grew calmer his sorrow was like a child's; he sobbed, he felt deep, deep compassion with himself; and these were his happiest moments. Oberlin spoke to him about God. Lenz quietly freed himself and looked at him with an expression of infinite suffering, finally saying: "But I, if I were almighty, you see, if I were that, I should not tolerate all this suffering, I should save, save; for all I want is peace, peace, so that I can sleep a little." Oberlin told him this was blasphemy. Lenz shook his head disconsolately.

His half-hearted attempts at suicide, which occurred regularly during this period, were not wholly serious. It was not so much the desire for death—since for him there was neither peace nor hope in death—as an attempt to recall himself to consciousness through physical pain, in moments of terrible fear or of a blank calm that bordered on nonexistence. Those times at which his mind seemed to be riding on some weird and eccentric idea were still his best. Then at least he was almost at peace, and his wild eyes were not as terrifying as in those moments of fear seeking for salvation, as in his unending torment of unrest. Often he beat his head against the wall or in some other way caused himself violent physical pain.

On the morning of the 8th he remained in bed. Oberlin went to see him; he lay there almost naked and was greatly excited. Oberlin wished to cover him, but Lenz complained bitterly, saying that all was so heavy, so very heavy!; that he did not think he could walk at all, that never before had he felt the immense weight of the air. Oberlin spoke to him encouragingly, but Lenz remained in the same position and would not stir during the greater part of the day, nor would he take any food.

Toward evening Oberlin was called away to see a sick person at Bellefosse. The weather was mild and the moon was out. On his way home he met Lenz, who seemed quite reasonable and spoke to Oberlin in a calm and friendly manner. Oberlin asked him not to go too far away; he promised. As he was moving off, he suddenly turned about, came quite close to Oberlin and said quickly: "You see, vicar, if only I didn't have to listen to that any more, I'd be cured."—"Listen to what, my

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dear fellow?"—"Can't you hear it then? Can't you hear the terrible voice that is crying out the whole length of the horizon and which is usually known as silence? Ever since I came to the quiet valley I've heard it incessantly, it won't let me sleep; yes, vicar, if only I could sleep again some day!"—Then, shaking his head, he moved on.

Oberlin returned to Waldbach, intending to send somebody back for Lenz, when he heard him walk up to his room. A moment later something burst in the courtyard with such a mighty noise that Oberlin thought it could not possibly be caused by the fall of a human body. The nursemaid came up to him, deathly pale and trembling all over. . . .[7]

With cold resignation he sat in the carriage as they drove west along the valley. He did not care where they were taking him. Several times, when the carriage was endangered by the bad roads, he remained sitting there, perfectly calm; he did not care at all. In this state of mind he passed over the mountains. Toward evening they reached the Rhine valley. They gradually left the mountains behind; now like a crystal wave the mountains rose against the red sky, a deep blue crystal wave on whose warm flood the red rays of evening played; a shimmering, bluish web covered the plain at the foot of the mountain range. It grew darker as they approached Strasbourg; a high, full moon, all the more distant landmarks in darkness, only the mountain nearest to them still in sharp relief; the earth was like a golden cup over which the gold waves of the moon ran foaming. Lenz stared at it all, not an idea, not an emotion inside him; only a blunted fear that grew more intense as the landmarks lost themselves more and more in the darkness. They had to turn in for the night. Then once again he made several attempts to lay hands on himself, but he was too well guarded.

On the following morning, in dull, rainy weather, he arrived in Strasbourg. He seemed quite reasonable, talked to all sorts of people. He did everything just as the others did; but there was a terrible emptiness inside him, he no longer felt any fear, any desire, his existence was a burden to him, a burden he must bear.

So he lived on. . . .

1 J. H. Jung-Stilling (1740-1817) was a Pietist; the first part of his long autobiographical novel was published by Goethe in 1777; five other volumes followed in the course of his life.

2 Christoph Kaufmann (1753-1795) lived at Winterthur, Switzerland, where Lenz stayed with him for some months. He was the writer of abstruse tracts for the betterment of mankind and a protégé of Lavater's. He had made the acquaintance of Lenz at Weimar in 1776 and visited Lenz's relatives in Livonia during a tour of Europe in the following year.

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3 *Der Hofmeister* (1774) and *Die Soldaten* (1775) are Lenz's most successful plays.

4 J. G. Lavater (1741-1801), the Swiss theologian and moralist, famous in his lifetime for his physiognomical writings. His *Aphorisms on Man* were annotated by William Blake, who greatly admired his writings. Goethe's attitude to him was more critical.

5 In 1772, at Sesenheim near Strasbourg, Lenz made himself ridiculous by courting Friederike Brion, for no other reason, it was said, than that Goethe had done so before him. One of Lenz's finest poems, *Die Liebe auf dem Lande,* deals with this episode; it should have served to vindicate his sincerity.

6 G. C. Pfeffel (1736-1809), the author of poems and fables popular at one time, lived at Colmar.

7 The gap in Büchner's story alluded to in the introduction occurs here. The reason why the nursemaid was "deathly pale and trembling all over" is that Lenz had just made another attempt at suicide by throwing himself out of the window. At this point Oberlin decided that Lenz could not remain in his house; he sent for two men to act as guards until he could be removed to Strasbourg, but before their arrival Lenz attempted to stab himself with a pair of scissors. In the course of the night he proved too strong for two men; a third was called in, but Lenz told them that even three would never cope with him. Oberlin managed to calm him by kindness and by consenting to pray for his soul. Later that day, Lenz agreed to his removal to Strasbourg and left, as Büchner relates, but with the same three men to guard him.

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